





J. W. HARDING

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A Bachelor of Paris

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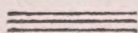
✓
JOHN W. HARDING

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM HOFACKER



FORMERLY PUBLISHED UNDER THE TITLE

AN ART FAILURE



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AN ART FAILURE

CHAPTER I

AMONG THE DECADENTS

IT was a boisterous and nondescript company that had gathered in the brasserie yclept the Paradis des Almées, in the Boulevard de Clichy, Paris, to celebrate New Year's Eve.

The Latin Quarter had invaded Montmartre, the Parnassus of the Decadents, which has become the rendezvous of moribund Bohemia. Débutants in and hangers-on to the worlds of art and learning—students in their first year, "old boys," who had vegetated round Saint Geneviève's Mount for many seasons without being one whit nearer the

attainment of the honors to which they were supposed to aspire, artists' models of both sexes, had migrated there and distributed themselves among the various places



that had acquired a reputation—at the Paradis des Almées; at the Chat Noir; at Lisbonne's, the picturesque Communist, who makes capital out

of the doubtful rôle he played in the rising of '71, and "citoyens" and "citoyennes" everybody indiscriminately; at Aristide Bruant's, the equally picturesque Zolaesque muse of Gutterdom—of the sinister, rou-flaquetted Gutterdom of the outer boulevards, which seeks its grim apotheosis in the Place de la Roquette, in the uncertain gray of nascent dawn, on the bascule of the guillotine.

The enticing title of Almehs' Paradise was supposed by the proprietor of the establish-

ment to be justified by the fact that the waitresses were attired in costumes vaguely suggestive of those worn by the dancing girls of the East—albeit, except as regards their get-up, the Hebes could not, with the greatest stretch of the imagination, be said to bear any resemblance to the commonly conceived idea of almehs, being the reverse of sylph-like and decidedly more beery than graceful.

However, the place was patronized by the poets of the *jeune école*—disciples and followers at a distance (oh! a very great distance) of Pau'



Verlaine, High Priest of Decadentism, and Mallarmé—men who wear long hair, and baggy trousers tight at the ankles, declaim their own verse, and court the divine afflatus in absinthe and bocks.

When Percy Vanstant, ciceroning Charles Burroughs, entered shortly before midnight, the brasserie was redolent of black puddings and patchouli, soupe à l'oignon and musk, saurkraut, violet powder, tobacco smoke, and other odors.

An abnormally stout and coarse-looking female, who rejoiced in the nickname of La Grosse Jeanne, was scooping in the shekels and keeping a sharp eye on the proceedings from an elevated counter, while her husband, who, stout as she was, could give his spouse points in the matter of embonpoint, was going among his customers with a napkin over his arm, shaking hands here and there, and occasionally sitting down to accept a drink.

Vanstant appeared to be well known, for

La Grosse Jeanne leered at him amiably, and nods of recognition greeted him from the demi-mondaines and habitués of the place, people of doubtful profession, or no profession at all, of which the remainder of the company was made up.

"Do you often come here?" asked Burroughs, surprised.

"Yes," replied Vanstant. "I make bold to say there isn't a bouge in Paris, however vile, with which I am not acquainted."

His friend looked inexpressibly shocked.

Charles Burroughs was American and an artist, and although he had been studying in Paris for half a decade, knew nothing of the shady side of the life of the capital. He had steadfastly set himself against the temptations which beset him on every hand, and to which so many English and American youths, left to their own devices in the giddy city, succumb, to the ruin alike of their health and prospects.

There was no particular merit in this abstention. He simply had no taste for pleasures of this kind. He had been brought up with Puritanical austerity, and, notwithstanding his five years of liberty, his ethical views and principles had undergone little modification. He knew more about the wooded environs of the city and the narrow and picturesque but evil-smelling streets of old Paris, that still cluster in the shadow of Notre Dame and round the quaint old church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, than the guinguettes and brasseries de femmes that abound in the Latin Quarter.

Percy Vanstant was an Englishman, and while he affected the cultivation of the muses in general, and of the muse of poetry in particular, was renowned all over the Quarter as a bon viveur and the prince of good fellows. He was, indeed, a noceur in the fullest sense of the word. He had plenty of money, and spent it freely, denying himself

nothing. He had tasted of every pleasure, and, as he had said, the mysteries of Paris life held no secrets for him.

Next to being a poet, he prided himself upon being a lady-killer. He worshipped at the shrine of Venus aggressively, with all the ardor of his sensual nature while the fit was upon him; when the reaction came, he shut himself up and wrote verse.

In appearance he was as unæsthetic as could well be imagined. Standing six feet three in his socks, he was broad in proportion, and with his clean-shaven face, bullet-head, and thick neck, looked a good deal more like a prize-fighter than the poet he fondly imagined himself to be. It is true a small volume of his verse, over the pseudonym of "Hyacinthus," and entitled "Blades of Grass," upon which he had expended much labor and midnight oil, had been sprung upon an unsuspecting public, but only after the fourth London publisher to whom he had

submitted it had been induced to reconsider his unfavorable decision by a *douceur* in the shape of a check for fifty pounds, wherewith to cover the expenses of publication.

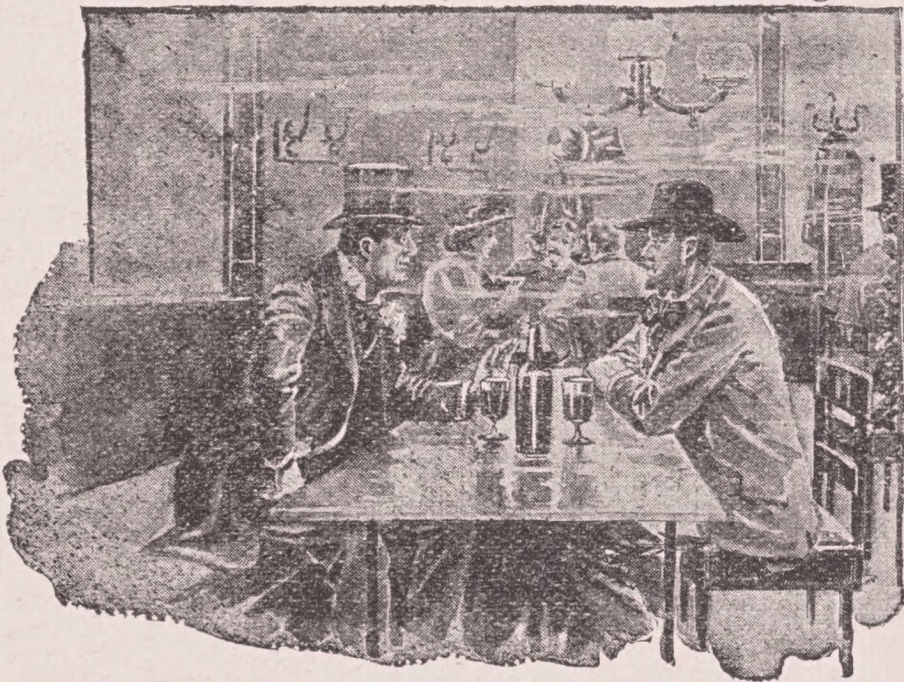
Vanstant had happened upon Burroughs shortly after the latter's arrival in Paris, and their casual acquaintance had soon ripened into warm friendship, though the painter resembled him in nothing, being slender, effeminate, reserved, and sensitive in the extreme. But the youth's sympathies had at once gone out toward the frank, genial, big-limbed, and big-hearted poet, while the latter made no secret of his admiration for his friend's talent, and sincerely believed that a great future lay before him.

He appeared to be highly amused at the artist's horrified surprise.

"Well," observed Burroughs, after a pause. "I can't say I admire your taste!"

The poet laughed. "My poor Burroughs," he said, "you are singularly unsophisticated

for a fellow of your age and profession. It behooves every man to know what is going on around, above, and beneath him, as far as lies in his power. It behooves him especially to study the seamy side of things, if he



would gather an intelligent appreciation of our complex existence. Nothing is more true than the old aphorism that one-half of the world has no notion as to how the other half lives."

"I don't agree with you," retorted the artist warmly. "I don't see why, because a man is conscious of the fact that a great deal of misery and vice exist in the world, he is therefore bound to live in a slum and wallow in the mire."

"Neither is he," admitted the Englishman.

"But," continued the former, "if you walk in the mud, you can't avoid soiling your boots, you know. Now I think it worthier for a man who has no ideal to create one for himself, place it upon a lofty pinnacle, and try to raise himself to its level."

"It all depends upon the ideal," said Van-stant.

Further conversation was, however, interrupted by a commotion in the brasserie.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the poet, jumping up and glancing at the clock, "it is midnight. Now you will see some fun. But first, a happy new year to you, old man."

The artist grasped his friend's hand warmly, but had scarcely time to return the compliment ere the poet broke away, unpinned a splendid camellia that ornamented his buttonhole, strode down the brasserie, and solemnly bending over the counter, presented the flower to La Grosse Jeanne, at the same time saluting her with a sounding kiss on both cheeks.

Simultaneously the company rose to their feet. Every man kissed every woman he knew, and did not know, who happened to be near him, and for the next five minutes the osculatory smacking dominated the laughter, compliments, clinking of glasses, and popping of corks.

Half amused, half disgusted, Burroughs watched the fun, but made no attempt to participate in it. His aloofness was noticed by a pretty young woman, who went up to him and turned her cheek to him to be kissed. The artist blushed scarlet, but

made no movement to respond to the invitation.

"He is a bear!" cried Nini la Blonde, the notorious model of the Gervex atelier.

"No," shouted the poet, who had taken in the situation at a glance from the other end of the room. "He's bashful."

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd who had turned to look at the embarrassed artist, and the next minute he was surrounded, dragged to his feet, and kissed and squeezed till he was breathless.

Attention was suddenly distracted from the artist, however, by a diversion of a very different nature. Shouts and screams were heard, followed by the smashing of glass and the overturning of a table, and two men were seen struggling together on the floor. A rush was made, but the burly patron, thrusting his customers aside with scant ceremony, clutched the combatants by the collar, flung one to the left and the other to the right of

him, and swore that if there was any further disturbance he would wring their necks and throw them into the street.

"That's enough of that, Le Beau Jules," he said; "and as for you, Antonio, you're always quarrelling with somebody. Allons! Sit down and behave yourselves, or it will be the worse for you. C'est épatant!" he added grumblingly, shrugging his shoulders, "the marjoys must select this particular moment to settle their differences, when everybody else is amusing himself. If they want to fight, let them go elsewhere."

Antonio's eyes blazed fury, but he sat down and stanchd the blood that streamed down his face from a cut on his forehead, while Le Beau Jules, an individual with abundant, chrysanthemum-like hair, smoothed his ruffled locks, and effaced himself sullenly at another table; and gayety once more reigned in the establishment.

Several tables were joined into one large

banquet-board, around which the choice spirits of the company assembled. Burroughs, who had been almost overcome by the hugging he had received and the odor of patchouli and peau d'Espagne, was recovering his composure and brushing the face-powder off his coat, when Vanstant dragged him, all reluctant, to a seat among the company.

"I drink to the Latin Quarter, the mother of Bohemia," said the fat patron at the head of the table, standing and raising his glass with elephantine grace.

"The Latin Quarter! Bohemia! The haunt of Henri Murger, of Mimi Pinson, of Schaunard and Musette, and their joyous, generous companions? Why, it no longer exists!" exclaimed Vanstant eloquently, springing to his feet and bringing his fist down on the table with such force that everything on it danced and rattled. "Modern hygiene has marked it for its own, and the pick and shovel now resound in streets which

erstwhile re-echoed nightly with the uproarious mirth of students, long since dead, or



become staid scientists, politicians, artists, littérateurs—pillars of the State; or engulfed with their ambitions in the mighty ruck of

mediocrity, respectable and otherwise. Imposing six-story buildings, 'with gas and water on every floor,' now replace landmarks once deemed sacred, inviolable.

"Vanished the frail but sympathetic grisette for evermore. True, the Bal Bullier, of joyous memory, yet struggles feebly to maintain its whilom reputation, and that of the Quarter generally, and an increasingly sober youth endeavors, in a half-hearted fashion, to perpetuate the traditions of the classic Boul' Mich' by monômes and other demonstrations, under the eye of an unsentimental police. But these are only the spasmodic flickerings of the candle-wick in the socket. Bohemianism is expiring, nay, has expired. snuffed out, as it were, by fin-de-siècleism. And a transformed Quarter shall know it no more."

"The poet is right," said Duransaur, the long-haired Decadent, when the applause which had succeeded Vanstant's outburst

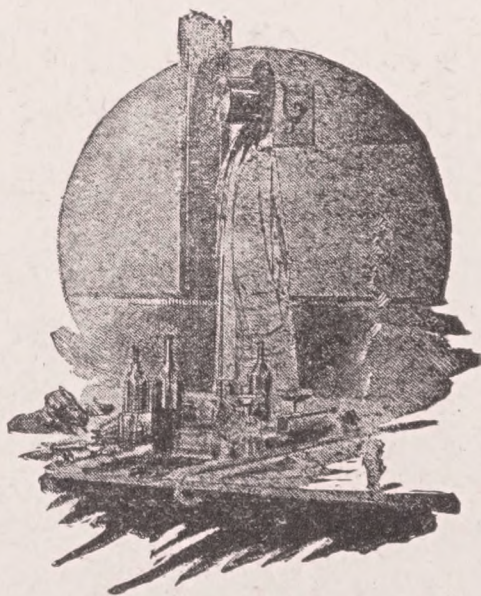
had subsided. "The Latin Quarter is played out. The mountain has come to Mahomet: Art, Poetry, Bohemia—or what is left of it—have migrated to Montmartre, the home of the New Idea. Pedagogues, and sawbones, and the sucking vultures of the law will continue to people the Boul' Mich', but the cultivation of the Beautiful will develop round the Mount of Mars.

"Still, let us drink to the Latin Quarter, for if it lacks its grisettes, has it not its Sarah Whites, its Boules de Loto, its Marie Pimbères, its Petites Irmas, and La Madeleine, perfection of models, nature's highest expression of beauty embodied in the female form divine, without whose presence this feast of reason would be bereft of its chief charm?"

"Yes," added Antonio, sneeringly, "and nature's highest expression of canaillerie in the shape of La Madeleine's type, that idiot with his hair à la Paderewski, who is mak-

ing eyes at my Irma and treading on her toes."

Le Beau Jules sprang to his feet, and the battle was renewed over the table, with bottles and glasses for weapons, until Vanstant, throwing his arms round Le Beau Jules, forced him into a chair, and held him there as in a vice, while the patron, seizing Antonio, whisked him under his arm and pitched him neck and crop into the street, with the intimation that he would get every bone in his body broken if he showed his face again.



CHAPTER II

THE DUEL IN THE SNOW

IN the meantime La Petite Irma and La Madeleine had got from words to blows, and had to be separated, too. The latter, with her abundant brown locks unloosened and flowing over her shoulders, and her torn bodice disclosing her ample breasts, looked the living picture of an enraged Amazon. La Petite Irma, with her ruffled flaxen hair over her eyes and the imprint of La Madeleine's nails on her doll-like face, presented an altogether sorry spectacle.

The whole place was in an uproar. It was realized that the jollification could not continue, and that the dispute would not end there. Antonio was notoriously the most quarrelsome and vindictive of all the Italian

models in the Quarter. He would certainly have his revenge, if he waited outside the brasserie all night.

Le Beau Jules' blood, on the other hand, was also up. He swore that no rascally Italian should insult him with impunity. He refused to be quieted either by coaxing or threats, or to listen to the expostulations of La Madeleine, and insisted upon going out to chastise his enemy. So most of the company also turned out to witness the fun, to the profound disgust of the patron.

"Come on," said Vanstant, grasping Burroughs by the arm, "there's going to be a duel."

"A duel!" exclaimed the artist, aghast.

"Certainly, why not? Everybody will see fair play, and they are quite as justified in slitting each other's wizen if they hanker to do so as deputies, journalists, or officers who exchange cards overnight and meet on the field of honor, as they call it, the next

morning. The only difference is that this encounter won't be heralded by a flourish of trumpets in the press."

"But I'm not going to stand by and see two fellow-creatures murder each other," said Burroughs firmly. "The police had better be informed."

"Don't be stupid," urged the poet. "They are not likely to do each other much harm."

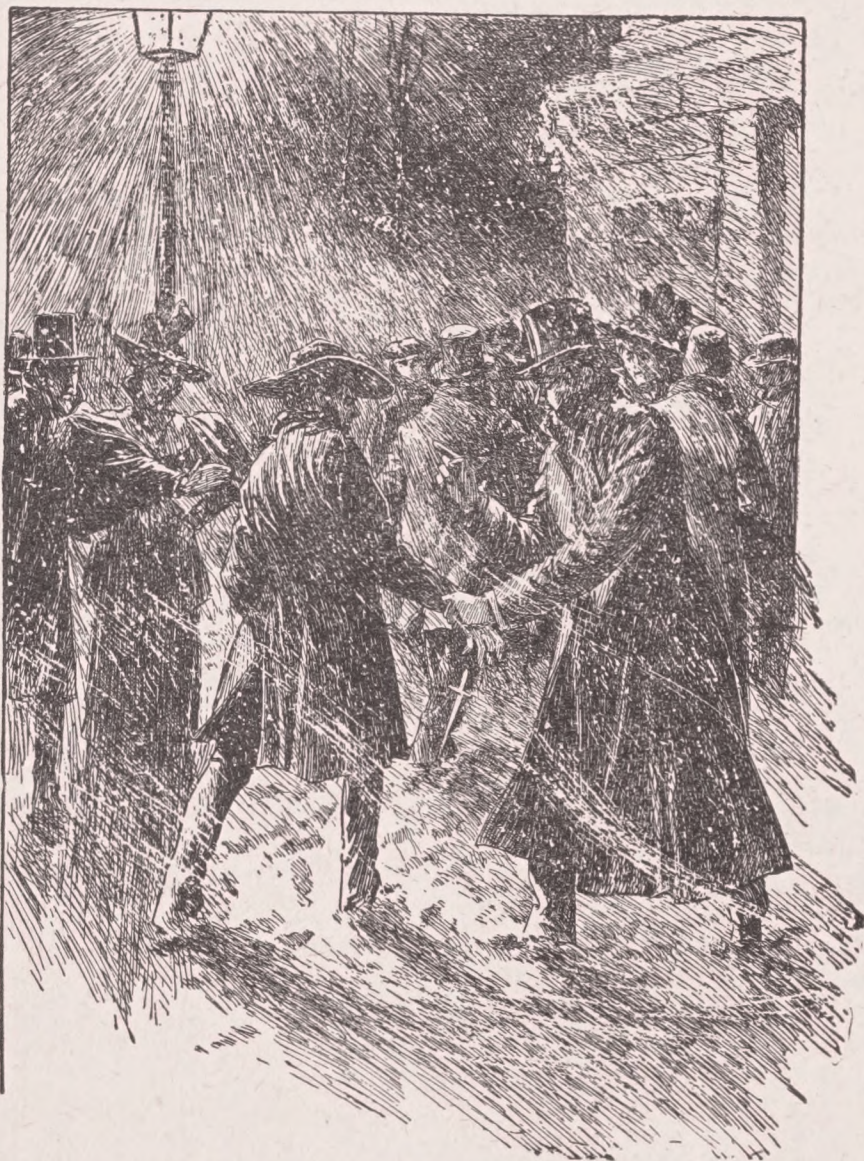
It had been snowing heavily, and the thick, white flakes were still falling when the party issued on to the boulevard.

Antonio was on the lookout, and as soon as he caught sight of Le Beau Jules rushed at him, knife in hand; but Vanstant was too quick for him, and gripped his arm with such force that the Italian writhed with pain and dropped the weapon.

"None of that," said the poet sternly. "You must fight fair or not at all."

Antonio's friends, male and female, crowd-

ed round him, and there was a few moments' excited palaver, after which two of them



went over to Le Beau Jules' group, and proposed an adjournment to the Rue des Saules,

on the northern slope of Montmartre hill. This was agreed to, and it was decided to reach the rendezvous by different routes, so as not to excite the attention of any inquisitive policemen they might meet.

Save for the murky glare of the occasional street-lamps, not a light was visible on Montmartre, all the inhabitants having long since retired to rest. Even that resort of voyouism, the Moulin de la Galette ball, was silent, for two o'clock, closing time, had struck nearly an hour before.

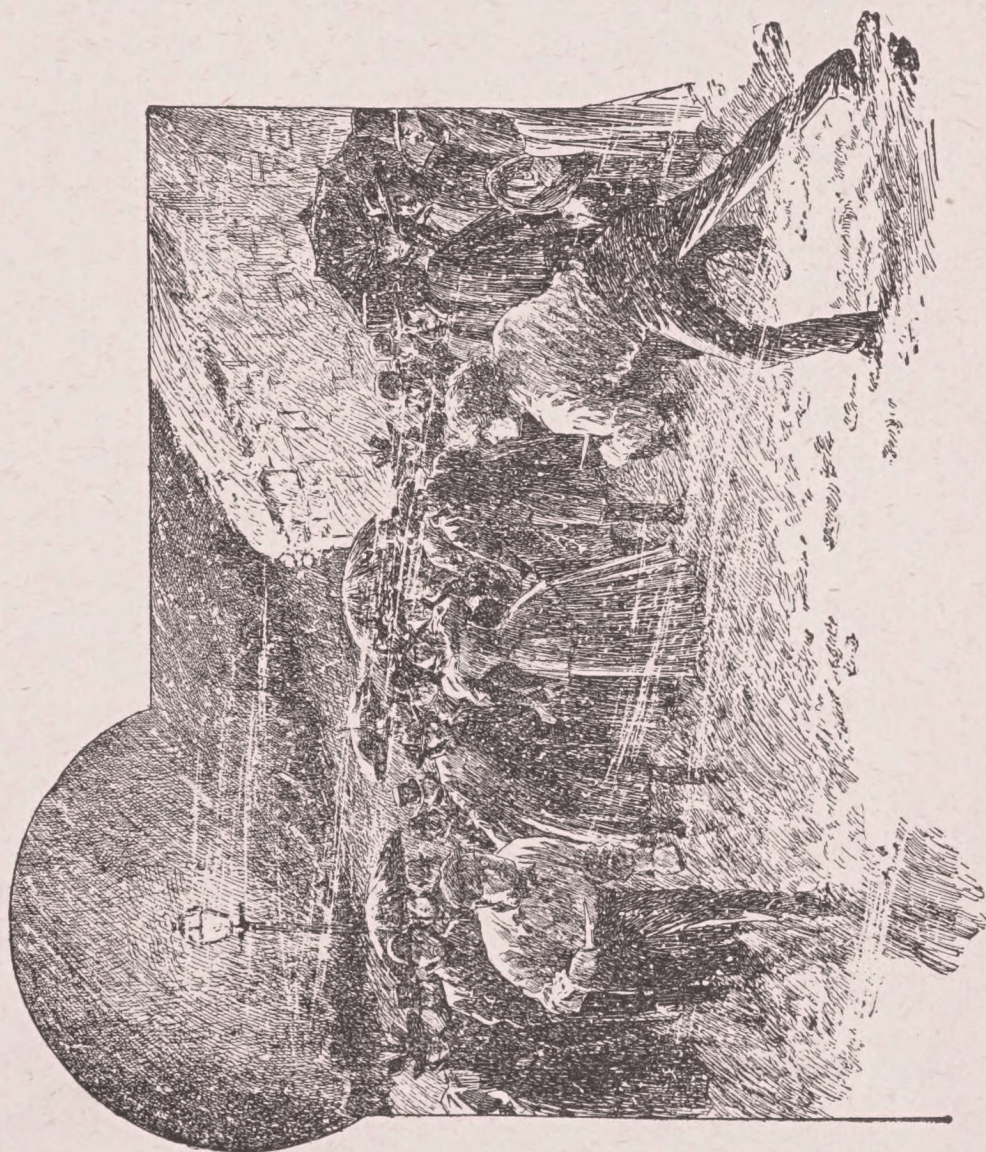
The Rue Léprieux, up which Le Beau Jules and his party ascended, was as silent as the grave, and they reached the top of the Rue des Saules without encountering a soul.

It was a favorable place for the meeting, there being no houses in the immediate vicinity; for the Rue des Saules is bounded by garden walls at the top, and sheers down the thinly inhabited slope toward the suburban town of Saint Denis.

Arriving there, Burroughs waited to see no more. He sidled quietly away, and when he had turned the corner out of sight, bolted back down the hill as fast as his legs would carry him. He emerged breathless on to the Boulevard de Clichy in search of the police, but had not gone far when he saw La Madeleine gesticulating with two hooded and heavily booted guardians of the peace.

Then he saw one of the latter start on the run toward a neighbouring police-station, and rightly concluding that there was now no cause for interference, proceeded on his long tramp home to the Latin Quarter on the other side of the river.

Le Beau Jules' group was speedily joined by the Antonio party, a ring was formed without further ceremony, and the two men having divested themselves of their coats, Le Beau Jules was furnished with a knife resembling as near as possible that of his rival, and they were let loose at each other.



"THEY CIRCLED ROUND AND ROUND IN THE SNOW."

They circled round and round in the snow, Antonio, cat-like, stealthily watching for an opportunity to break his opponent's guard and drive his weapon home; Le Beau Jules, now thoroughly afraid of the Italian, eyeing his movements with the perspiration pearling on his brow and his heart thumping against his ribs. Twice the Italian fainted, and twice Le Beau Jules recoiled. Then suddenly darting in, the former with his left knocked up his opponent's right arm, and lunged at his heart.

It would have been all over with the Frenchman had not Antonio, in his precipitation, slipped. As it was, the blade pierced Le Beau Jules' thigh, just above the knee. With a shriek of pain he kicked the half-prostrate Italian savagely in the face, and before he could struggle to his feet plunged his knife into his side.

It had all passed so quickly that none of the crowd could make a movement to inter-

fere on behalf of the man who was down. Nor could any one now go to his assistance, for at this moment a squad of police appeared upon the scene, and leaving Antonio extended on the snow, men and women dashed pell-mell down the hill, through the blinding storm, heedless of the shots from the revolvers of their pursuers.



CHAPTER III

BURROUGHS CASTS THE DIE

WHEN after five minutes' furious ringing at the door of a dingy old house in the Rue Serpente, off the Boulevard Saint Michel, the concierge pulled the cordon and let him in, Burroughs groped his way up the dark, tile-stepped staircase, successfully rounded its numerous and abrupt angles, and entered a room at the end of a passage on the top floor.

He lit a candle, and his attention was immediately attracted to a letter that had been thrust under the door. It bore the United States stamp and postmark and his father's well-known handwriting. With great agita-



tion he tore open the envelope and eagerly perused the letter, which was as follows :

“THE BRIARS, STATEN ISLAND, N. Y.,

“December 12th, 188—

“MY DEAR CHARLES :

“Your letter occasioned me considerable astonishment, and the greatest pain to your mother and sister. When, in lieu of the allowance I have been misguided enough to remit you every month I sent you a steamship ticket and ordered you to return, I expected you to obey me and take the next boat.

“You have been wasting your time daubing canvases in Paris long enough. In a moment of weakness, of which I now repent me, I allowed you to go, in the hope that while a knowledge of European countries and of the French language would be useful to you in my business, experience would convince you of the folly of pursuing a profession in which you would be a great deal more likely to starve than to acquire a reputation.

“I intend that in future you shall devote

yourself to the business in which, I am proud to say, I have amassed a competence.

"You hardly need to be told that I brook no disobedience, and I warn you that should you again fail to comply with my orders, I will cast you off without compunction and without appeal.

"Trusting you will have better sense than to place me under such a painful necessity,

"I am your affectionate father,

JOHN P. BURROUGHS.

"P.S.—Your ticket has been made good for the 'Bourgogne,' which leaves Havre on Saturday, January 12th."

So the crisis he had long been dreading had come at last. He was face to face with the alternative of breaking with his art, the absorbing passion of his life, and returning to the counting-house drudgery he abhorred, or of being thrown upon his own resources, cut off for ever from all that he held most dear in his native land. He knew only too well that there was no appeal from the pa-

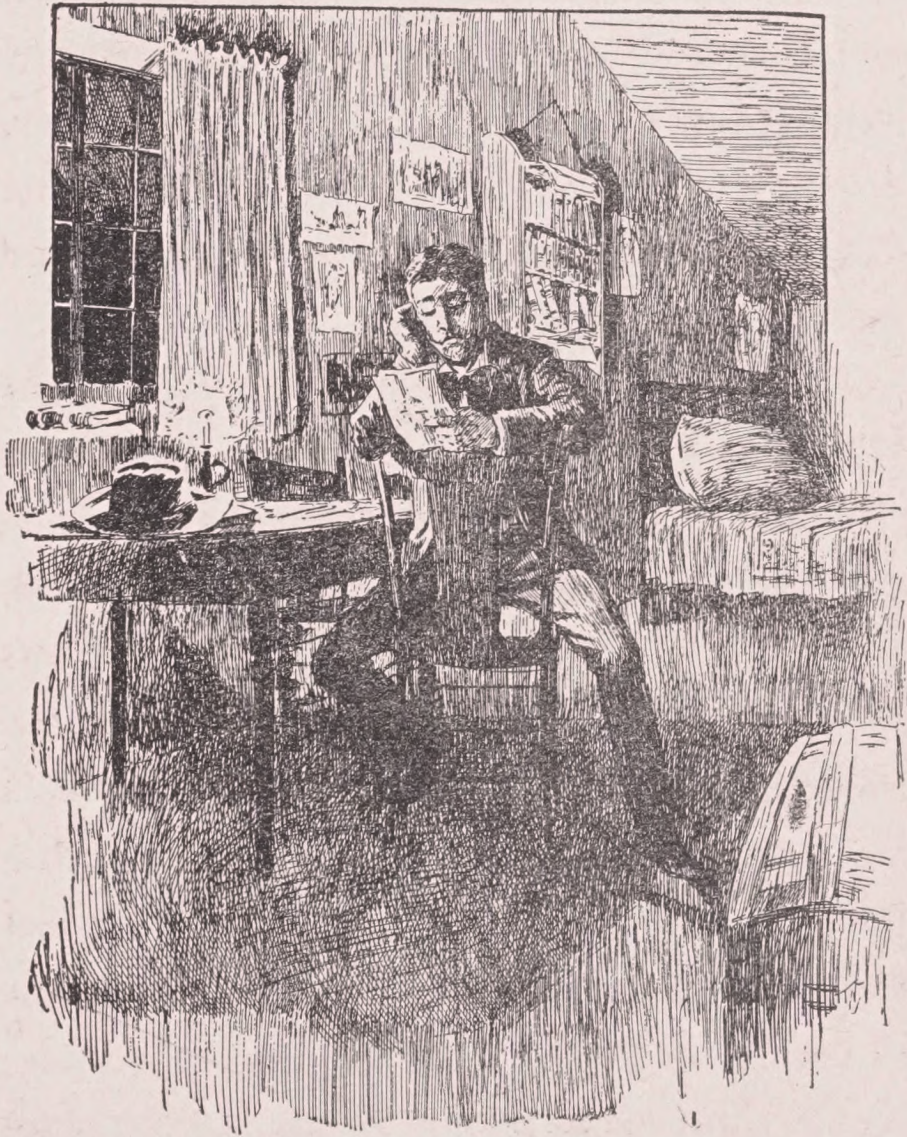
rental sentence. The old merchant's word was law, his decision Mede-and-Persian. He would do as he had said, and cast his only son ruthlessly from him should he dare to disobey, blot him out of his existence, and all the pleading of his gentle, timid mother and his sister, who adored him, would avail nothing.

He straddled a chair and gloomily read the letter again.

The uncertain light of the candle showed that the artist's abode contained, and, indeed, required, but little furniture. So small was it, in fact, that it was encumbered by the narrow iron bedstead, two chairs, a table, a trunk, and a couple of easels which, with a hanging bookcase and a number of sketches and studies on the wall, constituted the whole of his belongings.

Yet Burroughs was attached to the place and everything it contained. He had established himself here soon after his arrival in

Paris, and here for five long years he had labored courageously at his art and built



his Spanish castles. Now the latter, baseless fabrics of his day-dreaming, were to be

rudely dissolved at his father's bidding, while he, their architect, must awake to find himself shackled to an office-stool, between Debit and Credit, and his genius subordinated to the exigences of a commonplace commercial existence!

He got little sleep that night, or rather morning, and before noon had roused up Vanstant at his sumptuous quarters at the Hôtel de l'Aigle d'Or, in the quietest section of the Rue de Lille, near the old Cour des Comptes, whose picturesque ruins still overlook the river to remind Parisians of the dreadful days of civil strife through which they passed after the war of 1870.

Vanstant related to him the issue of the previous night's conflict. "By Jove! we had to run for it," he said. "La Petite Irma was the only one in the crowd who came near being captured. A big policeman grasped her by the shoulder, but I tripped him up, and, snatching the little chit, who was trem-

bling like a leaf, under my arm, made my way round by the Montmartre Cemetery on to the Boulevard de Clichy again."

The poet opened his eyes with blank astonishment when Burroughs informed him of the real reason for his visit.

"Drop the palette and brush for the office-stool and ledger? Impossible! Absurd!" he gasped. "You are trying to play off a joke on me," eyeing Burroughs suspiciously.

"I never play jokes upon anybody," retorted the artist shortly.

"Well, you don't," admitted Vanstant, with bland candor. "I don't believe you could perpetrate a joke to save your life. But what you say is too ridiculous. You couldn't do it."

"I know I couldn't," replied the painter gloomily, "but everybody isn't the son of a lord, with a fortune in his own right and another in prospective."

The poet looked aggrieved. "Well, I never imposed the handle to my name upon any fellow," he said, in an injured tone. "And as for my money, it isn't my fault that I don't have to earn it—I often wonder how the devil I should get on if I did," he added, with his old genial grin.

Burroughs reddened to the roots of his hair. "Pardon me, old boy," he said, holding out his hand. "I'm an ass, and you're the best fellow in the world. You would have succeeded in anything——"

"Except poetry," broke in the Englishman dubiously.

Burroughs handed him the fateful letter. Vanstant read it and looked grave. "Perhaps the governor's only putting the screw on. Perhaps he's open to persuasion," he suggested.

"No," said his friend, "he isn't. He's as unmovable as the Pyramids."

"Then what are you going to do?"

“Do? Why, stay in Paris, of course, and follow the lines laid down for me by destiny!” replied Burroughs exaltedly.

“Perhaps you act advisedly,” assented Vanstant. “It would be little short of sacrilege to nip such talent as yours in the bud. Besides, blood is thicker than water, and the old man is sure to be mollified when he finds your pictures being talked about in the papers. In the mean time, should fortune prove fickle—and accidents will happen in the best-regulated families, you know—remember, old boy, I am here and at your service.”

.

A fortnight later John P. Burroughs, wholesale grain merchant, seated at the breakfast-table, received a letter from his son in Paris. It teemed with filial respect, but announced the writer's determination to pursue his artistic career in Paris, whatever the consequences might be.

The merchant's wife and daughter, anx-

iously scanning his hard-set face, saw with dismay that it waxed sterner and sterner as



he perused the missive. When he came to the end he refolded the sheet deliberately, put it in his pocket, rose from his untouched

repast, and in a harsh voice ordered the women never to mention in his presence again the name of him who had been his son.

An hour later he was closeted with his lawyer in New York. When the interview was over he came out looking pale, but sterner than ever: he had disinherited the boy upon whom he had founded all the hopes of his declining years.



CHAPTER IV

THE PINCH OF POVERTY

THE winter of 188— was a severe one, but the elements at their worst had not been unkindler to shivering humanity than fickle fortune to Charles Burroughs.

The sum allowed him every month by his father was small, and barely sufficient for his needs; still, he had been able to count upon it. When funds were low he had run into debt with a light heart, knowing that at the appointed time he would have the wherewithal to settle the bills he was accustomed to run up with the keeper of the restaurant he patronised, and with the other purveyors of the common necessities of existence.

When the parental allowance was cut off, and he found himself thrown upon his own

resources, he speedily realized that one thing transcended even the considerations of art itself, and that was the necessity of procuring his daily bread, not to mention that of providing himself with fuel and of paying the rent of his modest lodging.

This did not trouble him greatly at first. He argued that the sale of a few pictures would provide him with funds for a long time to come. He had never previously thought of selling them, but he was conscious that his work was of a really high order, and had no doubt but that they would find a ready market.

He did not, however, rely upon these to establish his reputation. They would be merely the avant coureurs, as it were, to prepare the way for the great work—a “Beatrice”—upon which he had been engaged for months, and which he destined for the next Salon. He had guarded it jealously, even from Vanstant, in an empty mansarde, ceded

by the concierge for a consideration. But the time had come when he must lay the foundation of his fame. The picture must be finished and go forth to be a revelation to the world of art, a promise of glorious things to come.

And then his fancy conjured up roseate visions of wondering crowds round his masterpieces, a war of critics, the crown of Fame. He already saw the coveted notice, "Hors Concours," shining in gilt letters on the frames, already heard the reverent appellation, "Cher maître," addressed to him by his admirers.

Poor Burroughs! What, in his ignorance of life, could he know of the ways of the Great Art Dealer; of his influence upon the taste of the moneyed public, of his despotic power over the painter? How could he suspect that it is more profitable to juggle with the living names of the dead past, to boom the works, good, bad, and indifferent, of the

Favored Few of the Hour, than to recognize the gems of the unknown genius?

What could he know of the power of flattery upon the writer on art, misnamed critic; of his judicious servility?

He had never been initiated into the mysteries of the pot-boiler manufactory, where, under cover of a Name, pretty daubs are produced wholesale for a trifling daily wage, to be exchanged through the proper channels for checks of three or four figures.

In a word, he knew no more about the prostitution of the art he worshipped than a baby. And when experience opened his eyes to a few of these things, the wisdom was not bliss.

He soon found that it was easier to paint pictures than to sell them; that works of greater merit than his own glutted the common market, were accounted of no value, and went a-begging.

But he did not despair. He had absolute

faith in the future and in his magnum opus. The latter would draw attention to him. Then it would be all plain sailing; for, once known, he would not be compelled to seek, but would be sought, and the most terrible curse of struggling talent—indeed, of all struggling humanity, talented and otherwise—an empty purse, would cease to worry him and shackle his efforts.

Meanwhile, however, his position was desperate. He was utterly destitute. For the first time in his life he suffered hunger without being able to appease it; knew what it was to feel the cold without being able to protect himself from it except by staying in bed. It was horrible!

At the outset he had continued to take his meals at his accustomed restaurant, prolonging his credit under the conviction that one of his pictures would soon be sold and enable him to settle everything. But as the time passed and the cordiality of mine host

visibly waned, he grew ashamed, and finally dared not venture near the place. Then he fell back on bread and cheese, then on bread without cheese.

To add to his trouble Mme. Durand, the concierge's wife, was obliged to withdraw



without the money when she knocked at the door with the receipt for the rent. It had previously always been forthcoming regularly, accompanied by a liberal tip for herself. When, therefore, the woman cut short his excuses with the remark

that it was of no consequence and that there was no hurry, he could have embraced her, for he had awaited her coming with confusion and terror.

He had been the round of all the well-known art dealers, and one day, to his great

joy, chanced upon one who examined his work nonchalantly, and condescended to place it among the numerous other canvases which decorated the interior of the establishment. Eagerly expectant, he called at the place as often as he decently could, for a time, till he was told that if he cared to leave it, he would be duly notified when, if ever, the picture was disposed of.

At first, his hunger had tortured him horribly. Gradually, however, the craving diminished, and he found the cold much more terrible to bear. His trunk, the bookshelf, and the chair, had one by one been broken up and used for fuel. Then he worked at his "Beatrice" with the bedclothes wrapped around him, until his hands were so benumbed that he could not hold the brush.

All his books were disposed of to a brocanteur for a trifle, with which he was enabled, by careful management, to keep body and soul together for several days, and re-

plenish his store of pigments. Then gradually his meagre stock of clothes and everything else salable, including some of his beloved pictures, found their way to the same resort of the needy.

Had Vanstant been in Paris, all would have been different; he would speedily have remarked the artist's distress, and would have found means to assist him without wounding his susceptibilities. But he was not. A telegram announcing the critical illness of his father, Lord Studley, had summoned the poet to England early in the year, and no tidings had been received of him since. Burroughs would rather have died than make known his position to his friend, or to the masters at whose feet he had sat at Julien's and at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, who esteemed him highly, and would gladly have helped him with their influence.

Such was his sensitiveness on this point that having one day suddenly caught sight of



"WORKED AT HIS 'BEATRICE' WITH THE BEDCLOTHES
WRAPPED AROUND HIM."

himself in a glass while passing along the Boulevard Saint Michel, he was so startled at his emaciated appearance, that he slunk away from the crowded thoroughfare, fearful of meeting somebody who knew him.

None but those who are able to speak from experience can form any idea as to the amount of privation the human frame will endure. But this endurance, like everything else, save space and time, has its limits. Burroughs became feverish and nervous as he grew weaker. He would start at the least sound. On more than one occasion he had caught himself laughing hysterically, he knew not why. More than once, too, he had fainted from exhaustion while working at his picture, and his hand began to lose its cunning.

Sometimes, in a fit of gloomy despondency, he asked himself whether, after all, the game was worth the candle; whether it would not be better to capitulate and beg his father's

forgiveness, which would, on such terms, he doubted not, be accorded.

But, what! Give up so soon, and on the very eve of success? Never! Others whose names were writ large on the scroll of honor, for whom a niche had been reserved in the Temple of Fame, had pursued the same dreary up-hill road. And why not he? And if he failed, if he fell by the wayside? Well, he would have sacrificed himself in the cause of his beloved art, in the struggle of Soul against Matter, as many had done before him; and he could conceive of no nobler death.

But another and unexpected factor entered into the struggle: *he became afraid of his Beatrice as she developed toward completion!* The trouble began with her eyes. They worried him, and he would fain have changed them, but one day, when he essayed to do so, his own became blurred, a thousand orbs glared out at him from all parts of the canvas,

and with a shriek of terror he fled out of the mansarde into his own room, where the sight



of the few familiar objects that remained to him brought him to his senses for a time.

Thereafter, however, the heavenly bride of Dante filled him with dread, and it was only by a great effort that he could bring himself to work at the picture in his calmer moments.

She haunted him even in his sleep, assumed fearful and swiftly changing shapes, and pursued him over roaring torrents and down bottomless abysms, until he awoke in a cold perspiration, crushed, broken.



CHAPTER V

A FATAL FASCINATION

As though to compensate for its extreme rigor, winter came early to an end. The month of March was singularly balmy. It was the season when the artist and the poet were wont, as the latter expressed it in his "Blades of Grass," to seek inspiration

Of nature, scarce renascent, clad in all
The pristine loveliness of early Spring,
When Naiads, issuing from the ice-bound brooks
And waterfalls, scatter the fecund earth
With fragrant flowers, and all the feathered tribe,
Venturing from their nests, trill joyously
Their morning carol to the god of day.

Yet the return of spring, while it brought relief from the cold that had tried and handicapped him so seriously, was not hailed with

unmixed satisfaction by Burroughs. He had wasted to a mere shadow, and was weak in the extreme. The attacks of faintness had become more and more frequent, and alternated with delirium. In his lucid moments he fretted lest the picture should not be ready by the time appointed for submitting intended exhibits to the judgment of the Salon jury. Then he would work at it till his overwrought strength compelled him to desist. At other times the fear of Beatrice's eyes gat hold upon him and rendered him so nervous that he was afraid to go near the mansarde.

On these occasions he would pace up and down his little room and reason with himself, exerting all his resolution and strength of mind to overcome the trouble; or he would go out and walk about till the fresh air and the va et vient of the people in the streets restored his confidence.

At last the climax came. He had been

more than usually feverish all day, and a prey to the deepest despondency. Even the merciful oblivion that sleep sometimes brought was denied him. He lay on the bed oppressed by the solitude and haunted by nameless terrors, till he could bear it no longer, and, toward three o'clock in the morning, rose and fled into the street.

The night was as dark and cheerless as his own heart, but the cool air fanned his feverish brow deliciously, and he wandered on, aimlessly, through the Rue de l'Éperon and the Rue des Grands Augustins, and along the quays till he found himself on the Solferino Bridge, which spans the river between the Tuileries Garden and the ruins of the Cour des Comptes.

Save for the scarcely audible swirling of the waters against the piles of the bridge, not a sound disturbed the silence of the great, slumbering city. The artist leaned upon the balustrade and gazed vacantly upon the river

flowing onward, ever onward, to the sea, between the double row of dim gas-lamps that extended like strings of amber beads, until they converged and mingled murkily in the distant obscurity.

The reflections of the lamps near by danced upon the bosom of the restless river like things of life. Mechanically his eyes followed their movements until they lighted upon one reflection, in the deeper shadow of the Tuileries bank, that did not dance. He found himself wondering why this particular light gleamed there placidly while all its fellows flickered responsive to the throbbing of the flood. The thing irritated him, and he sought to dismiss it from his thoughts; but ever as he turned away his eyes, they were irresistibly drawn to it again.

He was fascinated, hypnotized by it, until at last it mastered his feeble will-power and held him there gazing fixedly at it.

Then the light began to emerge from

the water. It took shape. It became a being, a woman — O God! the creature of his own imagining, the Beatrice of his picture!

Motionless she stood there, her draperies merging in the blot of burnished gold beyond which his concentrated gaze could not wander, speaking to him with those wondrous eyes of hers, pleadingly, persuasively, with an eloquence more convincing, more soothing than the glibbest flow of soft, articulate speech:

“O weary heart, wherefore tarry ye sorrowing there? Wherefore abide ye friendless in the great, indifferent world of men? What recks it of thy sensitiveness, thy suffering, thy art? What to thee is the chimera Fame, that ever fleeing, fleest thee? Here is glory, the only, the real; here is rest, the real, the only. Come to me, O my love, come to thy Creation, thy Creature, thy Thing! . . . Come! . . . Come! . . .”

Delirious, the artist stretched out his hands toward the vision.

"I come! I come!" he murmured; and with his eyes ecstatically fixed upon those of his Beatrice he struggled on to the balustrade and swooned forward.



CHAPTER VI

LE BEAU JULES DESERTS LA MADELEINE

LE BEAU JULES had gone off with La Petite Irma!

Everybody in the Latin Quarter, La Madeleine excepted, had been aware of the relations existing between them, and had been looking forward with lively curiosity to the dénouement when Antonio, who had escaped being killed by the skin of his teeth, should come out of the hospital. Her suspicions, it is true, had been aroused on the night of the duel, and frequent and furious were the jealous quarrels she had picked with her lover in consequence. But Le Beau Jules had protested with an air of such virtuous indignation, and had acted withal so circumspectly that her doubts had been gradually allayed.

The note she had found lying on the table on her return from the atelier, briefly apprising her that he had gone away and that it was useless to seek for him, had come as a thunderbolt to her. She had devoted the best years of her life to him for this—to be abandoned for the one woman of all others she detested! Oh, the traitor! Oh, the coward!

Absolutely insane with rage and hatred, she had wandered all over the Quarter with a bottle of vitriol in her pocket, in the vain hope of finding them and taking a terrible revenge, until all the brasseries and other resorts were closed, and, baffled and exhausted, she found herself at the corner of the Boulevard Saint Germain and the Rue du Bac.

Then she began to reflect upon her position.

Life held no attraction for her. It never had much. Abandoned by her unknown

mother a few weeks after her birth, she had been brought up at the Enfants Trouvés, and on leaving that institution had been drafted into the service of a tradesman's family. But her independent, wilful nature could ill brook the drudgery of the kitchen, and she soon left this for the ill-paid and hardly more satisfactory métier of seamstress.

It was a fellow-slave of the needle who first introduced her to life in the Latin Quarter. While seated in a café one day a sculptor remarked her and admired her budding charms; but his admiration was purely professional: she seemed to him to embody an ideal he had vainly sought for. Without ceremony he crossed over to the girls and offered La Madeleine five francs a séance if she would pose to him. La Madeleine promptly and indignantly refused. Not a little surprised at this rebuff the painter increased his offer, with the same result. Then he knew she was not what he had

taken her to be, and raising his hat and apologizing, he retreated to his table.

From the appearance of the girls and the place in which he had found them, he had never dreamed but that they were "vendors of smiles," or models, or both. The disappointment only rendered him the more eager. He conceived the idea that the realization of his work depended upon securing La Madeleine for his model, and he determined to accomplish by foul means what he could not do by fair. Night after night he haunted every place in the Quarter where he thought he would be likely to find her, and finally his perseverance was rewarded.

He was young, good-looking, and sympathetic. She was a mere child, alone in the world, and suffering from her loneliness. She abandoned herself to him, hardly conscious of what she was doing, because he flattered her, and was the first being on earth to appeal to her affections. For eighteen

months she lived with him, the patient slave of his passions and of his art. Then, his work accomplished, he goaded her into a quarrel and turned her out.

The girl had no inclination to return to her former work. She had different notions about posing now, and so she became a professional model. She abhorred tight-lacing, and with her womanhood developed a figure as near the Grecian ideal of perfection as it is perhaps possible for the female form in these degenerate days to attain. Experts of the brush and chisel raved about her. The great X—— secured her services for a *louis à séance*, and when his sensational picture of Mary Magdalene daily blocked the Salon Carré of the Palais de l'Industrie with eager crowds from Varnishing Day to the close of the memorable Salon of 188—, the plastic beauties of the model formed the theme of many a newspaper rhapsody.

It is true that none of the enthusiastic

scribes had seen them, except on the canvas; but when the previously much-talked-about picture had been exposed to the expectant public gaze, "fame, with restless wings," had flown loquacious about the wonderful model, from the artistic purlieus of the Boulevard de Clichy and of the left bank of the Seine to the boulevards of the *rastaquouères*. That sufficed. She became *à la mode*, and to be *à la mode* in Paris is everything. It matters not whether the object of adulation be a Brav' Général, a Russian Admiral, or an artist's model: while the fit lasts he or she will have surfeit of it.

Ere it had been on exhibition a week the picture was purchased—by an "English milord," the papers said—at a fabulous price, and at the close of the show it was taken away and never seen again; but the title remained with the model, and she was always known afterward as La Madeleine in studio land, where she had previously passed under

the name of Françoise Blanc, given to her at the foundling home.

At that time, had she been so minded, she might have had her hôtel and carriage and pair. The jeunesse and vieillesse — especially the vieillesse—dorées of the capital competed recklessly for the prize against less ostentatious but more solid men of a totally different category. She received offers, too, from more than one enterprising manager of a theatre, with an eye to business. But she disdainfully nonplussed all comers. She had taken a fancy to a Frenchman in her own profession and reserved her favors for him. She kept him in clover as long as her high wages lasted, but when she found he did not work because he would not, she refused to support him any longer and allowed her affections to be alienated by Le Beau Jules.

She had always prided herself upon being an honest woman, and so she was, judged

from the ethical standpoint of her class, who see nothing immoral in twenty-first arrondissement marriages, and esteem all women above reproach who are faithful to their lovers. She would never have had another had the first been worthy of her, and she held in utter contempt the woman who sold herself for money.

She had loved Le Beau Jules, and he had sworn eternal fidelity to her. He had been false, and all the world was false. She was weary of her uncertain existence, disgusted with the perfidy and egotism of men and the jealousy and mesquinerie of women, hopeless as to the future. What had she to live for? Besides, in a day or two the story of her abandonment would get about and she would become the laughing-stock of the Quarter. The mere thought of it drove her mad with desperation and wounded amour propre. Decidedly death would be a thousand times preferable to facing this, she told herself

passionately, as she hurried down the Rue du Bac toward the embankment.

At the corner near the Pont Royal two po-



licemen were standing. She walked quietly past them along the quay to the next bridge, and then sped swiftly along it to the middle.

“O Blessed Mary, mother of God,” she moaned, “have mercy upon thy unhappy servant!”

For a minute she stood there, her face buried in her hands, sincerely penitent and demanding pardon for the act she was about to commit and for her past offences, of Him whose name she had not uttered for years otherwise than irreverently, as a meaningless oath. Then glancing furtively around to assure herself that she was not observed, she advanced toward the balustrade.

As she did so she was startled to see the form of a man struggling on to it out of the shadow. The man, who evidently had not noticed her, appeared to be drunk, and was on the point of plunging, or rather falling, into the dark waters beneath, when La Madeleine, forgetting that she had come there for the self-same purpose, instinctively clutched his arm. The would-be suicide swerved round and fell back upon her like a log,



"INSTINCTIVELY CLUTCHED HIS ARM."

nearly knocking her down, and striking the pavement with a thud.

La Madeleine gazed at him for a moment, undecided what to do. All thought of destroying herself had for the time being vanished. It seemed to her that there was something vaguely familiar about the form at her feet. She stooped and gently touched it. The man did not move. "Perhaps he stunned himself in falling," she thought, and kneeling down turned him over with his face toward the light of a gas-lamp. As she did so a cry of surprise escaped her.

She was not acquainted with his name, but knew him well by sight as the friend of the big English poet.

Intoxicated, he, and about to commit suicide?

A victim of absinthe and delirium tremens, no doubt. She knew from experience that the poisonous drug induced taciturnity and mopishness in some persons, and this

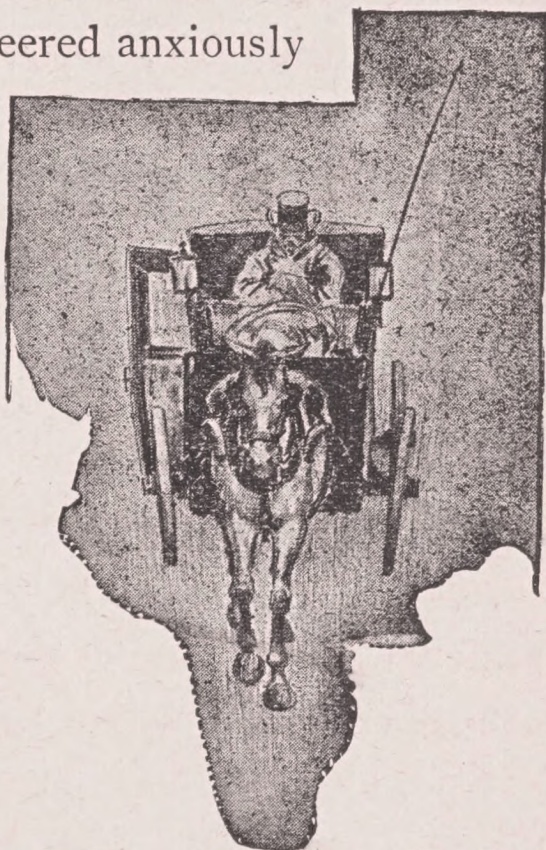
fact now seemed to explain the—to her—unnatural exclusiveness that had always characterized the young man, and had earned for him the cognomen of “Le Croquemort” among the rollicking set of the Quarter.

But as she gazed closer at the still, white face she was struck by the look of suffering it bore. And then the deep sunken eyes, the drawn cheeks, the wasted hands, the threadbare garments told a tale with which she was only too familiar. She had seen many an ambitious venturer on the sea of paint wrecked upon the rock of his poverty and vanish forever from the ken of the Boulevard Saint Michel.

La Madeleine, with all her faults, was not hard-hearted. She was filled with a great pity for the helpless young fellow before her, and in her reawakened piety attributed the fact that she had arrived on the bridge at this psychological moment to the direct intervention of the Virgin.

But what was now to be done? Having saved his life she could not leave him there unconscious, maybe dying. She ran first to one and then to the other end of the bridge, and peered anxiously to right and left.

Not a soul was in sight. She had started off in search of the police, when in a neighboring street she descried the lamps of one of those dilapidated vehicles, drawn and



driven by equally dilapidated horses and Jehus, that crawl about the streets between the witching hour and six A.M., and are dignified by a higher tariff and the title of night cabs.

Her mind was made up in a moment. She

hastened to meet the cab, and roused the driver who was slumbering on his box.

"To the bridge," she cried, jumping up beside him. The cabman rubbed his eyes and roused up the horse, which after a shower of blows with the butt-end of the whip broke into a jog-trot.

"Drunk!" said La Madeleine laconically by way of explanation when they came up to the body.

The cabman grinned, and seized the artist under his arms, while La Madeleine took his legs, and together they lifted him into the vehicle and laid him on the seat.

"Where to?" queried the Jehu.

La Madeleine reflected. Better take him home, if she could find out where he lived. If not, there would be time enough to take him to the police-station or the hospital.

"Drive up the Boul' Mich'," she directed.

As soon as the cab had got in motion she proceeded to investigate the contents of her

companion's pockets. In the waistcoat were a few sous, which she carefully replaced;



but in the coat was a pocket-book, and in that some letters, which were what she was

looking for. She could not read a word of English, nor would she have sought to pry into his private affairs had she been able to, her honor in this respect being above her curiosity. She concluded that as they mostly bore the same name and address they must have been addressed to him, and when the cab had rumbled a little way up the boulevard directed the driver accordingly.

When the cab stopped, La Madeleine, who began to be alarmed at the continued unconsciousness of her charge, despite her every effort to rouse him, jumped out and rang the bell furiously—an operation that, as usual, had to be repeated several times before the door opened. When at last she gained admittance she considerably startled the concierge and his wife by pounding on the window of the loge.

“Who’s there?” cried the worthy porter, and the response being quite unintelligible, he proceeded to investigate for himself with

a candle in one hand and a revolver in the other.

In a few words La Madeleine, without going into details, explained that she had found his artist lodger insensible in the street, and requested to know whether he had any friends in the house. The concierge eyed her suspiciously and did not answer, but after consulting with his wife said that he would come out and see the young man. This in a few minutes he did, accompanied by Madame Durand carrying the candle.



“Is he dead?” asked the woman apprehensively.

"No, drunk, I reckon," said La Madeleine.

"Oh! no," affirmed the former decisively. "Not drunk, I'm sure; or at least I should be very much surprised. He hasn't been looking at all well lately, and has been rather queer in his manner, hasn't he, Durand? I shouldn't wonder if something's the matter with him."

"Better send for the commissary of police, I think," opined M. Durand.

"Better get him up-stairs first, my dear, if he really *isn't* dead. Perhaps, as Mademoiselle suggests, he's only drunk after all."

"Hasn't he got any friends?" again queried La Madeleine.

"No," replied Madame Durand; "that is to say, a very tall and very chic gentleman used to come here sometimes, but I haven't seen him for months."

"Not another soul, male or female, has ever visited him to my knowledge," added Durand, "and if he has any friends anywhere

they can't be very well off, because he hasn't paid any rent for six months, and he must have been hard up not to do that."

"That's neither here nor there," said his wife sharply. "What we've got to do now is to get him up-stairs."

"Hold hard!" exclaimed the cabman, who had been an attentive



listener to the discussion. "I want to know who's going to pay me before you take him out. Mademoiselle's responsible, she hired me."

"Nobody asked you to put your spoke in," retorted La Madeleine scornfully. "I fetched

you, I'll pay you," handing him just his legal fare.

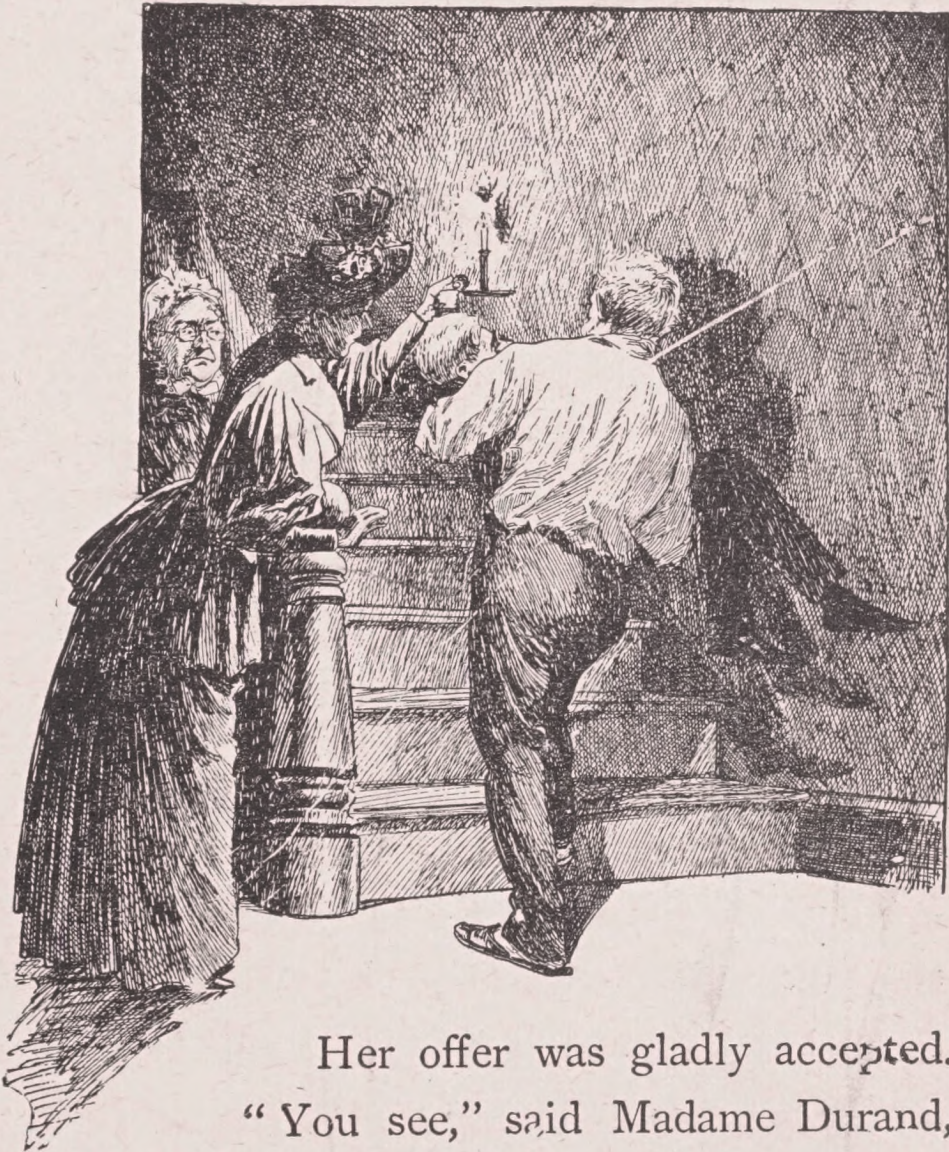
"And my tip?" he queried, eyeing the coins in the palm of his hand as though he expected them to breed and multiply.

"You can go to the devil for that!" said the girl, and the couple exchanged facetious compliments while the Durands lifted the artist out of the cab, after the husband had assured himself, by placing his hand over his lodger's heart, that the young man was not dead.

La Madeleine went to their assistance, and held the candle while Durand carried him up-stairs like a child in his arms. The dreary barrenness of the little room was sufficient explanation of the real state of affairs. Durand laid his burden on the bed while his wife stood by and clasped her hands with many exclamations of pity.

"Do you run for a doctor, Durand, while I light a fire and warm some bouillon," she directed.

Then La Madeleine, who had been silently holding the candle, volunteered to help her.



Her offer was gladly accepted.
“You see,” said Madame Durand,
“it’s a long way up, and I’m not as
young as I used to be.”

So La Madeleine made two journeys to the basement, carrying the wood and coal in a newspaper, and the first fire that had burned in the grate for many a day was soon started.

While the bouillon was warming, La Madeleine told the woman how she had discovered the artist on the bridge (without, however, explaining how she came to be there herself at that unseemly hour), and how she had found out his address.

“You are indeed a good Samaritan,” remarked the woman, whose first distinctly bad impression of her companion was dispelled by this explanation.

Together they raised the unconscious artist, and endeavored to pour some bouillon down his throat. Then they tried brandy, and smelling salts, and bathed his temples, but all their efforts to bring him round were unavailing, and they concluded that it

would be advisable to await the arrival of medical help.

At length M. Durand returned with the doctor from the neighboring police station. The medical man examined the artist long and minutely and looked grave.

"It is very serious," he said. "He is literally dying of starvation, and the case is further complicated by brain fever."

"He had better be taken to the hospital, then," said Durand.

"No," commanded the doctor, "he must not be moved on peril of his life. It is a wonder he is not already dead."

"But he's absolutely friendless," objected M. Durand. "We're only the concierges, and he's nothing to do with us."

"Oh! in that case," remarked the doctor, glancing round the room and shrugging his shoulders, "he may as well die on the way there, as remain here. It is only a question of a few days, perhaps only a few hours, anyhow."

“Then,” said La Madeleine quietly, “he shall die in his bed. If he has none other, I will be his friend!”



CHAPTER VII

SISTER OF MERCY

FOR six weeks Burroughs lay delirious, hovering on the brink of the grave, from which he was again saved only by the devoted nursing and self-sacrifice of the woman who had snatched him from the dark waters of the Seine.

Durand had grumbled at first, but La Madeleine had mollified him by offering to go security for the payment of three months' rent, at the expiration of the quarter, on condition that the proprietor would agree to let the settlement of the six months' rent due stand over till the artist recovered, and absolve her from all responsibility in connection with it in the event of his death.

To the latter agreement the proprietor con-

sented, but insisted upon an advance on the quarter about to commence, and La Madeleine had perforce to pay.

She was not rich, but she was resourceful. The very sight of her former surroundings was now hateful to her, and she had determined in any case not to afford Le Beau Jules the gratification of finding her in their old home if, as was highly probable, he grew tired of his new flame and sought to come back to her. Besides, she wanted many things in the bare garret where her self-imposed duties as nurse required her constant presence. So within a week she had her Lares and Penates transferred to Burroughs' room and took up her abode there.

The work of attending the sick man became extremely irksome and monotonous after the novelty of the thing had worn off and she had arranged the room to her satisfaction. However, she had vowed to the Virgin to go through with it, and stuck

bravely to her task, ministering to him night and day.

Sometimes Madame Durand came and gossiped with her, and occasionally brought her snacks from their own frugal board. At other times La Madeleine would slip down to the loge, where she was always welcome, for a fast friendship had sprung up between the two women.

The Durands were poor, but thrifty, with a thrift that in the case of the husband amounted to avarice. He would not have doled out a sou to assist his helpless lodger, but Madame Durand managed in many ways to be useful to La Madeleine, and notably by attending to the patient when his nurse went out.



In the mean time the latter had been compelled to "raise the wind." When she entered upon her disinterested labors her whole capital only totaled a few louis, and these were soon expended in medicine, firing, and other necessities. But this did not trouble her a little bit. The doors of the most celebrated ateliers in the city were still eagerly opened to her, and she easily secured eight francs and even ten francs for a séance of four hours where her less fortunate sisters were paid but five francs.

She had been posing for her old patron, the great X——. The latter was engaged upon an entirely novel rendering of the too well-worn subject of Saint Anthony's temptation, and had been cursing the disappearance of his model. When therefore La Madeleine turned up at nine o'clock one morning to resume her work, he hailed her with joy while overwhelming her with reproaches. Despite his threats and entreaties, however, she refused

to give him more than one séance a day to begin with, and with this he had to be content.

Thereafter she appeared punctually every morning at the atelier, and except that she remained firm in her refusal to return in the afternoon never manifested any of the old-time waywardness that had often driven the painter to the verge of despair.

Moreover her demeanor and behavior had undergone a complete transformation. She was no longer seen in the cafés and brasseries which she had formerly frequented as a matter of course, and when she happened to meet her acquaintances—and they were legion—she curtly acknowledged the greetings of a few, coolly cut others, and never stopped to converse with a single one, even when accosted.

X——, the painter, marvelled, but said nothing. The Quarter marvelled, whistled to itself, and gossiped. Some opined that

grief at her desertion by the irresistible Jules had turned her head. But the general belief was she had taken up with a wealthy admirer, and had become too proud for anything.

As to La Madeleine herself, she was absorbed for the nonce by the good work she had undertaken. For the future, when she thought upon it at all, she saw but two courses open to her: to take the veil, if that were possible, or to put an end to her aimless existence beneath the waters of the Seine. Between these she wavered.

She was entering the house in one of these thoughtful moods one afternoon, when she was accosted by a cheery "Hello! La Madeleine!" and turning found herself face to face with Vanstant.

"Hello!" she rejoined, "so you've turned up at last! Have you been up-stairs? Have you seen him?"

"Seen him? Who? Burroughs?"

"Yes, your friend the artist."

“No,” said Vanstant, surprised at such a question coming from her. “I only arrived in Paris this morning. Why do you ask me that? What do you know about him? Is anything the matter with him?”

La Madeleine asked him to step into the loge, and there he was informed of the misfortune that had befallen his friend, and, by Madame Durand, of how La Madeleine had cared for him.

Then they went up-stairs. Vanstant was greatly distressed at the artist's condition, and blamed himself bitterly for neglecting to keep himself informed as to how he was getting on. To do him justice, he had no idea that Burroughs had begun his struggle penniless. Moreover his own affairs had fully engrossed his attention, for his father had died and he had come into the title and vast estates of Studley. He had seized the earliest opportunity to drop over to Paris and look his friend up.

When Madame Durand had returned to her loge Vanstant, or rather Lord Studley, pressed La Madeleine to tell him how she came to know the artist, which she did, narrating with simple candor how she had been abandoned by Le Beau Jules, and how on going to throw herself into the river she had arrived in the nick of time to save the artist from the same fate.

"And now you have come," she added, "I have nothing further to do here. I will go."

"No, my dear Madeleine, you mustn't do that," said his lordship earnestly, taking her hand. "Go on with the task you have so nobly begun. I can best help him by staying away, especially if he recovers."

La Madeleine looked at him interrogatively.

"You couldn't imagine how susceptible he is," he continued. "He must not know that I have been here at all. Has he any pictures left?"

"Those four on the wall are his, and there is this," she replied, handing him a postcard.

It was from Duterque and Hoffmeyer's, the art dealers, and requested the artist to take his unsold picture away.

"The very thing," said Lord Studley with a smile of satisfaction. "I will buy the picture, but he must never know it."

It was only after much pressure, however, and on the poet's assuring her that he was compelled to return to England in a few days, that La Madeleine would consent to stay. But she obstinately refused to accept the money delicately offered to her for the expense she had been put to and might incur. The Durands were made glad by the payment of the rent owing, and bound to secrecy with a present so liberal that it made them gasp.

The next day the poet called at Duterque and Hoffmeyer's to fetch the picture.

"I want to encourage the artist, who is a

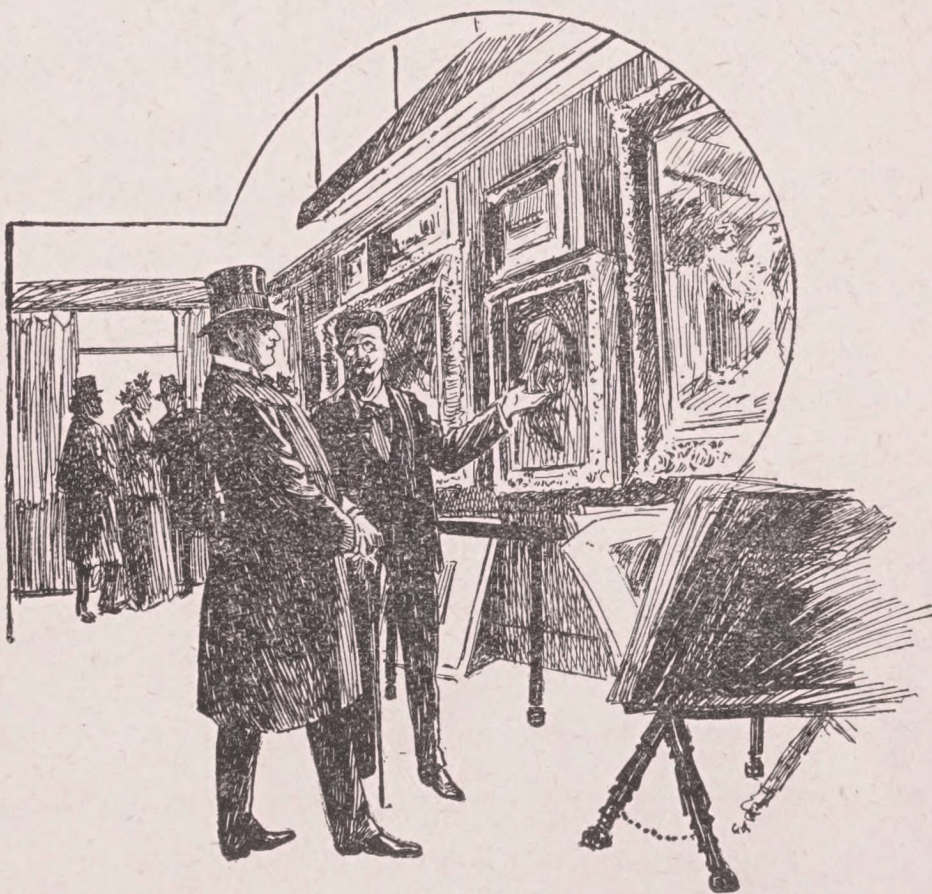
friend of mine," he said, showing them their postcard. "I will give you the usual commission on 2,500 francs if you will enclose these notes to that amount in a letter addressed to him, stating that the picture was purchased by a wealthy collector, who has ordered two others from the same brush."

This was done, and a week later a receipt for a similar amount was made out for two other pictures that the poet had fetched from the artist's room.

Studley then went through the collection in the establishment, and made a few valuable purchases on his own account, after obtaining the assurance of Messrs. Duterque and Hoffmeyer that they would never let Burroughs know the name of his benefactor.

Having in the mean time taken the best medical advice upon his friend's case, his lordship returned to England, after leaving with the concierges a letter for La Madeleine

containing a thousand franc note "to buy anything that might be required for the patient," and reminding her of her promise to keep him informed of the artist's progress.



CHAPTER VIII

THE JOY OF LIVING

WHEN Burroughs first came to his senses he was alone. It was in the afternoon. The golden sunlight streaming between two chimney-stacks on the opposite house-top glinted through a big bouquet of lilac that stood in a jug at the open window, and still further illumined with its glory a garish colored chromo of the Virgin and child pinned to the wall.

For a space he lay there languidly watching the motes dancing along the slanting way of light. Gradually, however, the floodgates of memory opened, and thoughts of his picture and of his misery filled his mind. He essayed to rise, but found that his weakness was too great. Then he became conscious of the changed aspect of his room.

At first he imagined that he was the victim of an hallucination. But he had to believe the evidence of his eyes, and then he fell to wondering where he was, and how he got there. He recognized his few remaining studies on the wall, and the familiar chimney-pots he could see from his bed. Nothing else. The clean sheets, the scrupulously tidy room, the carpet on the floor, the strange furniture, the lilac at the window, the female apparel hanging behind the door, the articles of feminine toilet on a real toilet-table, and the other indubitable evidences of a woman's presence puzzled him.

Had he got into the wrong room? He trembled with fright at the idea! Yet the fact that he was too weak to get up forced him to the conclusion that he had been ill. In any case he could only wait till somebody came and explained it all to him.

That somebody was not long in coming. Madame Durand softly opened the door, and

took a spoon and a bottle of medicine off the toilet-table.

"Is that you, Madame Durand?" called Burroughs feebly.

"Dieu de Dieu!" ejaculated the woman joyfully, going to the bed, "he knows me! He is better! He is saved! Oh! my poor monsieur, I am so glad. I always said God in His mercy would bring you safely through it."

"I have been ill, then?" said the artist, as she smoothed the pillow.

"Ill! my poor monsieur, yes, you have been ill! But there, you must not talk, you must not exert yourself."

"But," persisted Burroughs, "how long have I been ill, and where am I?"

"You are in your own room, and you have been ill for six weeks."

"Six weeks!—my own room!—Then my mother, my sister is here?" he added, glancing eagerly around.

"No, we did not know whether you had any family, or where to find them. But you have a friend—a sister here. Oh! yes, you have a sister, une vraie, celle-là—a saint!"

"Who is she?" he asked, astonished.

"They call her La Madeleine."

"La Madeleine!"

"Yes; do you know her?" queried the old woman curiously.

"Certes, no! There is only one person of that name I have ever heard of in Paris, and she is a model, not a sister of mercy."

"She is a model *and* a sister of mercy, to you; for she is the person you speak of. But, there, the doctor ordered absolute quiet. You have talked too much already, and I too, like a silly old woman that I am. I will give you your medicine, and you must be quiet."

Burroughs was more hopelessly bewildered than ever. He took his medicine, but he would not be quiet. He pleaded so earnestly

that Madame Durand allowed her firmness to be shaken, and sitting by the bed told him all she knew.

When La Madeleine returned Madame Durand, who was on the lookout for her, called her into the loge and acquainted her with the good news.

Strange to say, La Madeleine's satisfaction was not unalloyed with a vague regret. He had been her unconscious patient for so long, she was so accustomed to ministering to him, that it had somehow seemed to her that he would remain thus indefinitely. He had been the object for her daily toil, the *raison d'être* for her existence. His awakening was the beginning of the end of her mission.

The two women went up-stairs together. The artist was sleeping.

"Don't wake him," whispered La Madeleine, and Madame Durand quietly withdrew, after vainly trying to induce the girl to go down-stairs with her and have some dinner.

La Madeleine wanted to be alone with her thoughts. She sat beside the bed, motionless, in a brown study, her elbows propped on her knees and her chin propped in her



hands, gazing out beyond the chimney-pots at the patch of sky, until the twilight shaded it with an ever-deepening blue, and a star glistened out of it in solitary splendor—a stray jewel on the sable mantle of night.

A faint, appealing moan recalled her to earth :

“Mademoiselle!”

La Madeleine rose to her feet instantly, and bent over the bed.

“I am burning, I am thirsty,” murmured the sufferer.

She propped him up with her arm while



she held a cooling drink to his lips. Then she drew his head on her breast and stroked his feverish brow and his face as though he

had been a little child, in the protecting, motherly way that had come naturally to her during the weeks she had been nursing him—held him there and soothed him while his poor, weak frame shook with sobs, and in a passionate burst of weeping he incoherently poured out his gratitude to her for all her goodness and told her the terrible story of his suffering.

When the fit was over he was exhausted.

She laid him back gently on the pillow, and he again sank off to sleep. The cry and confession seemed to have done him good, for he slumbered like a child through the night, while La Madeleine sat and watched him.

Thereafter he began to improve rapidly and was soon on the high road to convalescence. He experienced the joy of living in a greater degree than he had ever done in his life before. All was rose-color to him now. At last his talent was beginning to be recog-

nized. His pictures had sold at an incredibly high price, and he had funds sufficient to keep him in relative luxury for a whole year.

Ah! what would he not accomplish in that year! How pregnant with big results it would be to him. He was eager to be about again and to work at his picture, though he would now, alas! have to wait till the next Salon before he could show it to the world. Till then none save La Madeleine, who slept in the mansarde, could set eyes upon it.

At the thought of La Madeleine he was troubled. He was profoundly grateful to her for the disinterested care she had taken of him, and felt that it would never be in his power to repay her. Whenever he broached the subject to her she coldly evaded it.

More than once when she was musing and thought he was sleeping, he had seen the tears coursing down her cheeks, and a look of hopeless misery in her eyes. Poor Made-

leine! still suffering from pique at her abandonment, she doubtless looked forward with scant pleasure to the shadowy future. Just what he could do for her he did not know, but he wanted to do something for her somehow, and would always be a friend, a brother to her, even in the days of his greatness. The difference in their future stations would make no difference to him, he prided himself, with just a little self-satisfaction at his surprising condescension.

Or maybe she was thinking of Le Beau Jules. He felt a pang half of jealousy, half of sullen anger at the idea, though he would not have admitted such a thing even to himself. But, pshaw! she would soon console herself with another lover—women like her always did, he supposed—and she would relapse into her old life again quite naturally.

In the mean time he looked upon her going away as a disagreeable necessity that he did not care to dwell upon. The fact was, he

could not bear her out of his sight. The days she spent at the atelier appeared to him interminable, and he awaited the hour of her home-coming with restless impatience. How he would miss her cheery presence, the succulent, cosy dinners she prepared with such skill, and the pleasant evenings they passed together during which she beguiled him with queer reminiscences, grave and gay, which threaded together told the story of her life. She somehow seemed to have become a part of his existence, though to what extent he did not realize until the time came for her to go.

It was one evening after dinner, when the lamp was lighted. Burroughs, who was convalescent, and experiencing one of those rare moments of whole contentment when one is at peace with one's self and all the world, was listening to the rain-drops pattering on the window-panes and watching the smoke of his cigarette curling in gray-blue clouds toward the ceiling.

La Madeleine, who had been unusually thoughtful throughout the repast, broke the silence that both had guarded by tacit consent for fully five minutes.

"I am going away," she said. "You are well now, and do not need my care. I cannot stay here any longer."

Burroughs was bound to admit to himself the wisdom of her decision, though it impressed him very painfully. It must be so. Their position was a most irregular one. It was altogether contrary to his principles, and at first he had been very uneasy about it. It was strange how this uneasiness had worn off as he became accustomed to her presence. His conscience had pricked him at times—at increasingly long intervals—but it had been quieted by the argument that the situation had not been brought about by himself, but by force of circumstances; that it was a purely platonic and wholly necessary one, and that it must of necessity soon be put an end to.

“And when do you propose to go?” he asked, with just the suspicion of a tremor in his voice.

“This very night—now. I have made all arrangements.”

“To-night!” he repeated mechanically. Had she mentioned some future day he might perhaps by a determined exercise of will power have reconciled himself to the idea. But she was going away at once, and when the door had closed upon her she would be practically shut out of his life forever, and he would be alone in his dreary solitude. And then, for the first time, he understood what that meant for him—that he loved her; that the joy of living that gladdened his heart and was making him strong and well emanated from and depended upon her.

He thought upon all she had done for him. She had saved him from a suicide's fate; a stranger, alone in the world, spurned by his own father, penniless, helpless, unconscious,

dying, she had taken him in from purely disinterested motives. Yet she, too, had been abandoned and was alone in the world!

The narrowness of his pet views and theories was suddenly revealed to him as by an open book. Where was the merit in the chastity of her sisters who had been jealously guarded and carefully reared to womanhood and then given in marriage? How many of them cast adrift, with none to guide them, exposed to the buffets and allured by the mirages of life, would have passed through the ordeal as well as La Madeleine had done?

His art? His future? His love would inspire him to great deeds, and when he was great he could afford to laugh at the world and what it thought and said. And, after all, what to him was art, the world, anything, without La Madeleine?

Flushed and agitated he arose.

“Madeleine! Madeleine!” he cried appealingly, “you must not go—I cannot let you

go. I love you, Madeleine, and you must stay with me always!"

She gazed at him for an instant with wide,



frightened eyes, then starting up seized her hat and fled out of the room.

He rushed after her and wrestled with her

on the landing, but his strength gave out; he sank exhausted at her feet, and La Madeleine continued her flight. Despair, however, gave him fresh energy, and struggling



up, he bounded after her and caught her ere she had reached the street.

"Come back, Madeleine," he implored. "Do not leave me to die!" And La Madeleine, fearful of creating a scandal, returned to reason with him.

“What you ask is impossible, my poor boy,” she said. “I am ten years older than you. In a year or two your infatuation would wear off; you would tire of me; you would regard me as a clog upon your efforts, a drawback to your advancement; you would deeply regret your folly, quarrel with me, leave me. And what would be left for me?”

“Madeleine, I swear——”

“Hush!” she interrupted with a mocking laugh, keeping him at a distance with a gesture. “You forget that I have been through this before—more than once. You would not pick up what others—many others—have cast off as worthless!”

“Oh! Madeleine, don’t! don’t!” he supplicated, clasping her and placing a hand on her mouth. “They were not worthy of you. Don’t think of the past. Think only of me and of my great love! Let us forget that we have lived. I have not lived till now. I

will always be true to you, Madeleine, always, always! I will marry you, I swear it! I will worship you all the days of my life. Only tell me that you love me."

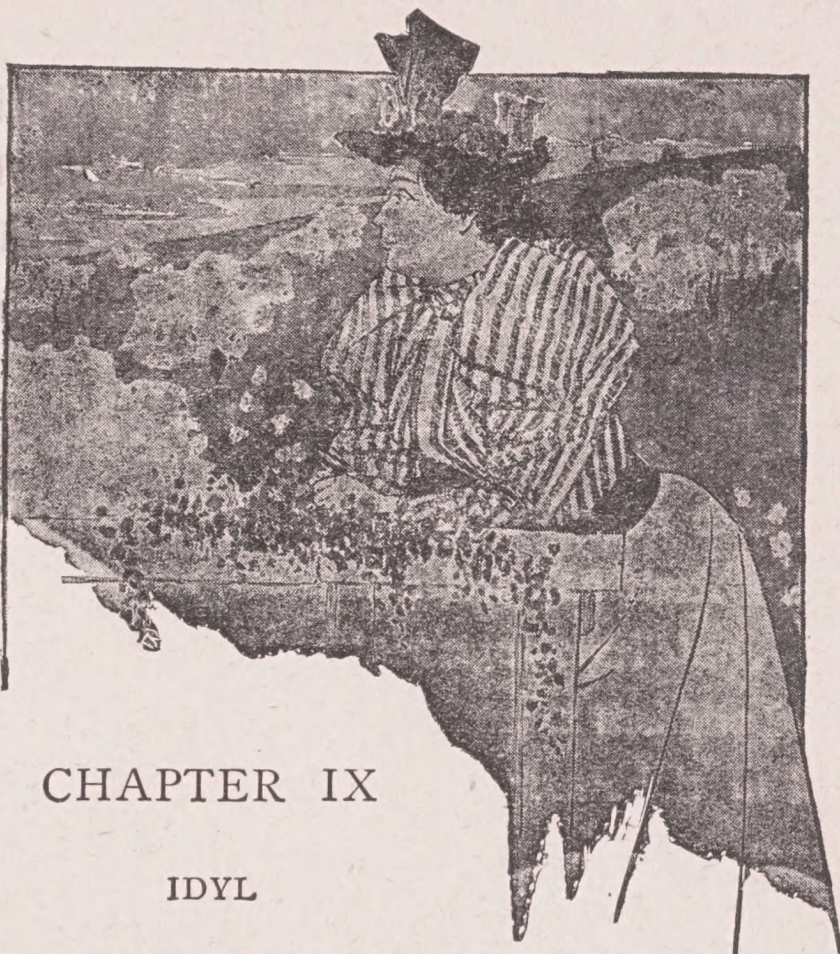
"It is because I love you that I seek to disabuse you," she moaned, disengaging herself and burying her face in her hands. "If I listen to you, you will hate me, and curse me one of these days. It is useless to protest. I know only too well what I am talking about. It is better to part at once and forever. You will soon get over it, and then you will bless me."

"My darling," exclaimed the artist passionately, "my life was a blank until you came into it. I was lost in the gloom of a loveless existence until you illumined it with the sunshine of your presence. Do you think it was a mere coincidence that in going to your death you should have saved me and yourself at the same time? No, Madeleine, it was destiny. We were to come together.

Or, if you do not love me, if you will leave me now, it would have been far better to have left me to die then, for I cannot live without you."

He opened his arms. A tender light that he had never seen there before beamed in Madeleine's tear-dimmed eyes. He drew her, unresisting, to him, and their lips met in the ecstasy of a first kiss.





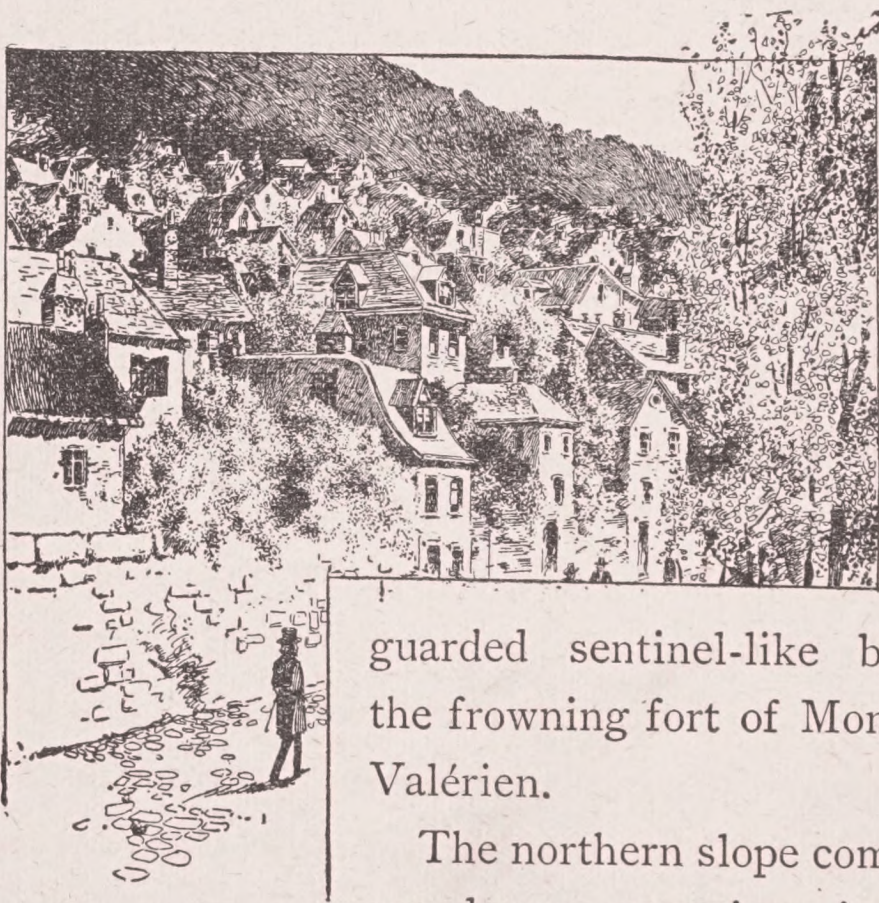
CHAPTER IX

IDYL

REACHED by omnibus from Argenteuil, from which it is separated by a vast plain devoted to the culture of asparagus and the vine, Corneil straggles up the southwestern extremity of the wood-clad hills of Argenteuil, and is one of the prettiest and quietest little villages in the department of Seine-et-Oise.

From the southern slope of the range the

eye can reach from Saint Denis to Saint Germain, and away beyond the river-divided plain over Paris and its suburbs clustering round the gilded dome of the Invalides, and



guarded sentinel-like by the frowning fort of Mont Valérien.

The northern slope commands an extensive view of the valley of Montmorency and of the opposite forest-crowned hills of the same name.

It was to Corneil that Burroughs and La

Madeleine had come for the change of air essential to the complete re-establishment of the former, and to spend their honeymoon. Monsieur and Madame Burroughs occupied a modest lodging in the house of a vine-grower in the highest part of the village, and were supremely happy.

Burroughs simply adored his wife. He was furiously, madly in love with her, and made no effort to restrain the violence of his passion. He worshipped the very ground she trod upon; her voice was the sweetest of music to his ears; her presence was as necessary to him as the air he breathed. In his eyes she was the most radiantly beautiful woman in existence, and he marvelled at his former blindness and at the fact that having once seen her he had been able to live without her. He was completely transformed. The fierceness of his flame was the more intense because the volcano which, all unknown to him, had been smouldering in the depth of

his sombre nature, had been for so long suppressed beneath the crust of his austerity and strength of will. Now that it had found an outlet it was beyond control. It filled his whole being, it mastered his mind and body, and the intoxication of the present rendered him indifferent anent, oblivious of, the future.

There were moments, however, when the thought of his idol's past and that she had been another's damped his delirious joy. Then he was tempted to kill her and himself. But a word, a smile, from La Madeleine, who regarded his fits of gloom as a natural but temporary outcome of his illness, healed the wound as by magic and brought him instantly under her spell again.

La Madeleine was awed by the extravagance of his love and of her own. She had imagined that she loved Le Beau Jules: she had mistaken the need of the sympathy of a kindred soul for the divine passion itself. It had been reserved for this scion of a cold,

phlegmatic race, who spoke her tongue with a broad English accent and hopelessly mixed its genders, to reveal love to her in the flower of her womanhood, and the revelation had come with the first contact of their lips, that had thrilled her through and through. In her eyes he was the embodiment of all that was most noble, and generous, and great in man. There was none like unto him in all the world. He had elevated her to a higher, purer atmosphere, communicated to her the spirit of the poetry of his nature.

They would wander together far away into the country, into the glorious blaze of morning sunshine in the valley, odorous with the perfume of countless fruit-trees in bloom. In the coolness of the lingering twilight, when the insect world that peopled the woods mingled its myriad voices in the drowsy hum of the evening lullaby, when the air was heavy with the smell of acacia blossoms and of the earth and plants and trees refreshed by

dew, they would stand silently on the hillside, hand in hand, and watch the lights gleam out one by one through the heat-mist that overhung the great human hive beyond the plain.

The artist rarely went out without his sketch book, or paint box, but the subject of his skill was always the same: La Madeleine. The shady avenue, the flower-starred dell, the distant landscape that appealed to his artistic instinct only served as a background wherewith to set off her dainty figure.

And thus they lived, or rather dreamed, through the long, warm days of summer, while the grape harvest was garnered, while the woods took on their autumn tints of gold and russet and red, till November winds souged coldly through the trees and whirled the shrivelled leaves in wild, fantastic eddies over the hardened ground.

Then they returned to Paris.

The country had been good, but it was



"THEY WOULD WANDER TOGETHER FAR INTO THE
COUNTRY."

good to be in town once more. There is a season for both. The rain that slanted out of the lowering clouds at eventide on to the sodden slopes and roads of Corneil and dripped monotonously from the leafless trees in the wood was depressing. In Paris it beat upon the even pavement and transformed it into a mirror in which the electric lights of the street-lamps and of the brilliantly illuminated cafés on the boulevards reflected a silvery and golden sheen. The careless crowd sauntered along, laughing and chatting under their streaming umbrellas, a race of incorrigible flâneurs, never in a hurry and seemingly indifferent to the rawness of the temperature. Dainty female forms, raising their skirts provokingly, with the inimitable grace peculiar to the Parisienne, flitted in and out through the ceaseless stream of vehicular traffic that rumbled over the sound-deadening wood-paved road.

It was an animated scene, that electrified

Burroughs, that imbued him with renewed energy and an eagerness to be up and doing. His dormant ambition was roused. He felt himself capable of great things. Paris had vanquished him, but it was his turn now: he would conquer Paris!

On reaching the Rue Serpente, unable to restrain his impatience, he bounded up the stairs to the mansarde where his unfinished "Beatrice" stood. Opening the door with some trepidation, he tore aside the covering and gazed long and intently at the picture. To his great joy he found that his fear of it had vanished. The eyes seemed to have lost their hypnotic power, and looked out of the canvas at him with the beatific expression he fancied must have shone in them when the celestial maid appeared to Dante on the banks of Lethe. Yet now that they had lost their influence over him, a vague doubt for the first time invaded his mind.

He started when La Madeleine touched

him gently on the shoulder, and turning folded her convulsively in his arms.

“Ah! my little wife,” he sighed, “would to God I had loved you before I commenced my picture. Would to God I could undo all that I have done, and begin over again. But that cannot be; I dare not. It is too late, too late!”



CHAPTER X

FACE TO FACE

HAPPY, happy, Madeleine! Happy in the love of an honest man, happy in her love for him, happy in the consciousness of her regenerated womanhood, happy in her hope and confidence in the future. But—there is always a “but” or an “if” that shadows, be it ever so lightly, the satisfaction experienced at the wish gratified or the end attained—her happiness was sometimes marred by a trouble which she did not dare to make known to her husband. She dreaded that any day she, or both of them, might meet her old lover, Le Beau Jules. Knowing the latter as she did, she was convinced that he and La Petite Irma could not long agree, and that he would sooner or later return and seek her till he found her.

And then? If he met her in company with her husband, what would happen? Since the memorable night when, folding her in his arms, he had sworn to love and cherish her, and entreated her to bury the past in the abyss of forgetfulness forever, Burroughs had never made the slightest allusion to her former life, nor to any of the persons connected with it. Whenever she manifested a tendency to wax even the most innocently reminiscent, a coldly absent look which she did not like to see there would settle upon his face, and knowing she was treading on dangerous ground she would hasten to change the subject.

A nature capable of such deeply passionate love as he had shown might, she suspected, be capable of equally passionate wrath when roused, notwithstanding that he was physically delicate. Le Beau Jules was morally a coward, but he was strong and hot-headed. He would never believe that they were mar-

ried, and if he did would not care. He was too much of an egoist. Rage and jealousy would crush any generous sentiment he might possess, and he would pick a quarrel with and insult her husband.

If she met him alone she would scorn him; she would not know him; she would treat him with contempt. If he persecuted her, she would, for her dear husband's sake, explain her position to him and reason with him. If he then persisted—she did not know what she would do.

She preferred not to meet him at all, and to avoid the possibility of doing so had suggested to Burroughs that they remove to a quiet little place in the environs somewhere. Did he remember how happy they had been at Cormeil? How good it would be to live in the country always. How she would like to have a bit of garden of her own. Or, if he did not care to leave the city, they might reside on the other side of the river—in the

Ternes quarter, for instance. It would be so nice to be near the Bois de Boulogne, where they could get a breath of fresh air, and away from the Boul' Mich', where they were known "comme le loup blanc."

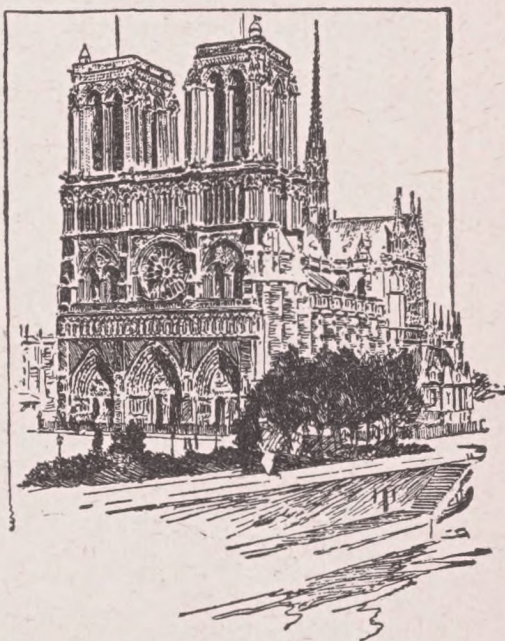
But Burroughs had gently but firmly declined to shift. He loved the Quarter for itself, and for the sorrows and joys he had known in it. For the people who inhabited it he did not now care a tinker's anathema, and he did not suppose they were any more interested in himself or his affairs. "They will be one day, though," he had added with a hopeful smile, "and that ere long." Then she should have a place in town *and* in the country.

So she had bowed to the inevitable, though feeling just a little hurt at his lack of regard for her sentiments, or at his want of comprehension of the situation, and trusted to luck while remaining as secluded as possible. She had also faith in the protection of the

Virgin Mary, to whom she attributed all the benefits that had befallen her and all the felicity she had enjoyed since the incident on the bridge.

La Madeleine had become very devout in a simple and earnest way. She never went to confess, nor did she observe fast days, nor follow in any way the rules and customs of the Church; but when her marketing took her near Notre Dame she frequently dropped into the cathedral and offered up a brief but heartfelt prayer for continued protection, for blessings upon her husband, and for the success of his work.

One afternoon she wended her way as far as the Halles Centrales in the hope of find-



ing something with which to tempt Burroughs' dainty appetite at dinner. On her way back she entered Notre Dame. She dipped her fingers into the holy-water basin, purchased, as she was accustomed to do, a small taper, which she lit herself and spiked with a number of others that were burning before the statue of the Virgin with the Child on her arm, and then continuing down the left aisle knelt upon a rush-bottomed prie-dieu.

There were very few people in the grand old fane. Half-a-dozen tourists, English or American, were walking round and gazing up in reverent awe at the lofty, slender-columned arches and at the mysteries depicted on the marvellous stained-glass windows, while an usher in a loud voice was informing them that for fifty centimes apiece the treasury might be visited. One or two women and a Little Sister of the Poor, who had come there for the same purpose as La Madeleine,

were bending in front of the chancel rail before the high altar. A few miserable tatterdemalions, out at knee, out at elbow, and of various ages, were apparently engaged in a profound study of the statues and confessionals in the side chapels. In reality they were warming their shivering limbs over the gratings in the floor of the aisles, which sent up a comforting stream of hot air. And opposite the placid Virgin, in an obscurity unlightened by a solitary taper, the unheeded, agonizing Christ looked out upon the scene with an all-embracing regard of tender pity.

La Madeleine had been somewhat low-spirited all day. She was oppressed with a vague apprehension of impending evil which she had been unable to shake off, and looked for the solace she rarely failed to find in prayer; but though she prayed longer and more fervently than usual she rose from her devotions nervous and unquiet. She was conscious that some one was watching her

intently. Her heart leaped into her mouth as she turned her head and saw Le Beau Jules fixing her with curious and embarrassed interest, but her perturbation did not show itself. There was not the suspicion of recognition in the calm, expressionless gaze that met his for a single second.

It was impossible to pass to the other side of the church, for the side aisles are railed off from the seats which flank the central aisle. She drew down her veil, quietly quitted the row of chairs, forgetting the small parcel she had laid beside her, and to avoid passing him walked down the church, intending to go out by a side door in the Rue du Cloître.

Her former lover was quickly beside her.

"Madeleine," he murmured.

La Madeleine did not reply.

"It's *me*, Madeleine," he insisted, touching her arm.

She turned and eyed him with cold sur-

prise. "Whom are you addressing?" she demanded. "I do not know you."

"Oh! come, now, don't be stupid," expostulated Le Beau Jules, with an embarrassed attempt at a laugh. "I know I haven't acted square, and all that, and it's only natural you should feel sore about it. So do I."

"Sir," she said again, "I do not know you. Leave me."

"Mazette! but we have become mighty haughty as well as mighty religious all of a sudden. I've been looking for you everywhere. Luckily I caught sight of you in the Rue de Rivoli just now. I followed you, curious to see what you were up to and where you were going. I little expected to follow you in here, and to find that you had been struck so good as all that. No, but seriously," he continued, finding she took no notice of him. "Don't be stupid. I promise I'll never do it again. I'm a changed man—fact, I am! Ah! if you

only knew what I've been through! You were right when you used to say that I should never find another like you. I've found out my mistake. I'll tell you all about it, presently."

"Look here," said La Madeleine, "you are wasting your time and your breath. I don't want your explanations. The greatest service you ever rendered me was in leaving me. If you want to do me another, never speak to me again. It is all over between us forever. I am married—do you understand?—married; and I don't want to be seen leaving here in your company."

She passed out of the church, but he followed close at her heels.

"Married!" he said incredulously, "married! You? Collée, you mean!"

"I tell you I am married."

"Allons donc! What are you giving me? You take me for another! Collée you are, I know it, and it isn't nice of you. You knew

well enough I would come back, and might have waited for me. However, it's my fault. I have no right to reproach you. I have acted dirtily myself. It serves me right. But I have returned, my little Madeleine—and here I am!"

She made an impatient gesture.

"Listen, my little Madeleine," he continued, in softly coaxing tones. "I know you are with a type who has money—they told me so—and that you don't pose now; but you can't love him—neither I nor you can love anybody else after loving as we have loved. You need not go back. Ah! no I could not hear of that! I have found you again. Let us forgive each other and begin afresh."

"Were I homeless, friendless, starving, I would rather beg; I would rather sell myself body and soul to the first comer; I would rather lie in yonder morgue than return to you! Do you hear me?" cried La Made-

leine fiercely. "As it is, I am married, really married, and happy."

"Married! Oh! la, la! You persist in giving me that blague!" said Le Beau Jules sneeringly. He had been rather cowed by her passionate outburst, but tried hard not to show it.

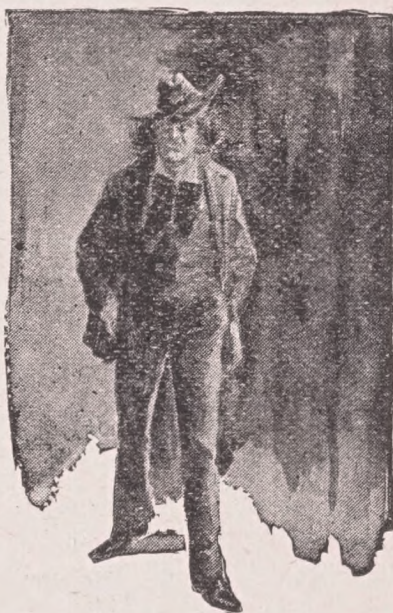
"Yes, and if you have still a spark of manhood, of generosity left, if you ever did care for me," she went on, becoming in turn appealingly persuasive, "you will leave me now and forget me; you will never show that you know me if you meet me."

"It is not true that you are married! You lie, nom de Dieu!" he shouted furiously, seizing her wrist so roughly that his nails sank into the flesh. "I see it all, now: you are the mistress of a priest!"

Like an enraged tigress La Madeleine turned upon him and struck him in the face with all her strength, crying, "Coward!" Releasing his hold he staggered back a few

paces, and she followed him up, her hands clenched, her face distorted, hissing, "Coward! Coward! Coward!"

Rapidly as the violent scene had passed, it had attracted the attention of several persons, who began to form a small crowd. La Madeleine walked quickly down the street without once looking back. Le Beau Jules stood for two or three minutes dumbfounded. He hesitated between following her up and renewing the quarrel, and letting her go her way. Discretion carried the day, and he strolled sheepishly off in the opposite direction, philosophizing to himself. He was satisfied that he had completely lost his hold upon her and that there was not the faintest hope of ever regaining it.



“Let her go to blazes, after all, since she’s like that,” he muttered. “What a vixen! What a fury! Since she has got in with the calottins she has developed a worse temper than ever. Word of honor, one would think she was the only woman in the Quarter! She forgets that there are others.”

La Madeleine went home by a roundabout way, purchased some provisions to replace those she had left in Notre Dame, and when she reached the Rue Serpente all trace of her excitement had disappeared.



CHAPTER XI

CRIME AND EXPIATION

AT the corner of the Rue du Tresor and the Rue Vieille du Temple, a few hundred yards from the Rue de Rivoli, is a small wine-shop, kept by one Petrelli. There is nothing to distinguish it from the ordinary fourth-rate brown-painted mastroquet, except, perhaps, that at night rather too much economy is observed in the matter of gas.

Two or three men were playing at zanzi-bar—that is, throwing dice—for red eggs and demiseptiers of “petit bleu” at the zinc counter, behind which the patron was engaged in wiping glasses with a napkin that had presumably once been white.

Now and then a few young men, sometimes accompanied by companions of the

other sex, sauntered into the shop and passed through a door at the rear, admitting momentarily as they did so a burst of harmony and a flood of light.

"Many there to-night?" queried a youth, as he stopped to light a cigarette at a gas-jet on the counter.

"Not many for a Saturday," was the answer, with a dubious shrug of the shoulders.



A slight, girlish form appeared at the door, hesitated a moment, and advanced into the shop.

"Is *he* there?" asked the visitor, addressing the patron.

Yes, he thought *he* was there—leastways, he had seen and spoken to him early in the evening.

"La Petite Irma!" he exclaimed, looking

after her with curious interest. "Tiens! tiens! I wonder where she comes from and what she is up to? Hi! you there, Jean, come here and look after the counter a minute."

La Petite Irma pushed open the mysterious door, and found herself in a long T-shaped room. Several couples were waltzing down the long central section to the strains of an orchestra composed of two violins and a harp, elevated out of the way on a couple of tables at the other extremity.

In the rooms forming the angles were a number of small tables, at which men and women were seated, smoking, drinking, and chatting.

After each dance a woman—the wife of the patron—went among the perspiring couples and collected two sous from each of the men.

The company was composed principally of the sons and daughters of sunny Italy, and

the women, attired for the most part in the picturesque garb of their native land, obviously belonged to the itinerant-musician class, who grind out popular airs on a barrel-organ, or violin, or accordion, most excruciating of instruments; or to the lowest order of models, who invade the ateliers en famille, and in the summer when work is slack laze away their dolce-far-niente existence in squalid misery in the Mouffetard quarter.

La Petite Irma was evidently no stranger to the place. She threaded her way through the throng of dancers to the other end of the room, and peered eagerly through the cloud of tobacco smoke that enveloped the tables.

The color in her doll-like face came and went rapidly as she perceived Antonio engaged in earnest conversation with a strikingly handsome girl, attired à l'italienne, whose laughing, lustrous eyes beamed with evident pleasure at his flattery.

La Petite Irma watched them for an instant, pressing her hand to her heart to still its violent beating, then went up to him and,



bursting into tears, threw her arms round his neck.

“My Antonio, pardon!”

When he recovered from his surprise, Antonio, deathly pale, arose, and throwing her

from him as though she had been a poisonous reptile, raised his hand to strike her.

"Antonio!" exclaimed the patron reproachfully, staying his arm.

"Let me alone!" retorted the Italian hoarsely; then raising the weeping woman cowering at his feet, he threw a five-franc piece on to the table, and hurried her into the street, leaving his late companion giggling angrily at her abandonment.

They made their way to the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and walked rapidly backward and forward along the deserted asphalt, the man with knitted brow and tightly clenched hands, the woman at his side imploring his pardon, and telling him between her sobs the story of her seduction and desertion by Le Beau Jules.

"I was mad," she said. "He seemed to exercise some mysterious influence over me, and maybe I wanted to spite La Madeleine. He was afraid of you and of her, and we

went to Rome. He said there were many French artists there, and we should get plenty of work to do.

"At first he was all that was kind; but when the money was gone and we could find no work he became irritable and morose. He quarrelled with me about La Madeleine, and one day when I reproached him for having tempted me away from you, he reviled me and would have struck me, but I fought him. I had borne everything up to then, but I could not stand that. *He* was not *you*.

"I never resisted when you beat me, my Antonio, did I?" she continued, clutching her companion's arm and gazing entreatingly into his livid face, which was rendered the more sinister by the grim smile that flickered over it.

"Go on!" he ordered, shaking her off.

"When I showed fight he became perfectly mad with rage. He rushed at me like a wild beast, and struck me down. How

long I lay there I do not know, but when I recovered my senses he was gone.

“I had not a sou, but after a time some of the artists at the Villa Médicis helped me, and I managed to scrape together enough to pay my fare back to Paris. I arrived yesterday, and have been searching for you ever since. They told me at the old lodging that they had not seen you for a week.”

She stopped. Her companion vouchsafed no remark, but strode along in moody silence. La Petite Irma grasped his arm coaxingly. This time he suffered her hand to lay there, and, emboldened, she continued:

“I have wronged you, my Antonio, but I have never ceased to love you. Kill me, if you will, but avenge me—avenge us!”

“Do you know what became of him?” he inquired, after thinking awhile.

“I heard last night that he had been seen in the Quarter for some days past, and that he was hunting for La Madeleine every-

where; but they say that she went off with a howling swell—a banker or something—months ago, and has not been heard of since.”

Antonio looked at his watch. It was just eleven o'clock.

“Are you hungry?” he asked.

“I—I have eaten nothing since last night,” she faltered.

“Then get something and go home,” he said, handing her a few francs.

“You are good,” murmured the girl, her eyes filling with grateful tears. “Wo—won't you come with me?”

“No; I have an appointment.”

“Can't you put it off?”

“No.”

“Will you come later?”

“Perhaps.”

He walked away, but she followed him.

“Kiss me, Antonio, just one kiss,” she entreated, “just one!”

He stood a moment irresolute, then kissed her gravely on the forehead. She clung to him, and he kissed her quickly, passionately, many times on the mouth, broke away, and was gone before she had recovered her breath.

La Petite Irma stood gazing stupidly in the direction he had taken. She wondered where he was going, and why, since they had "made it up," he had not remained with her. But she wondered more than all at his kindness. She had expected to be spurned and terribly beaten; she had even feared he might kill her on sight.

That he would have done so had he encountered her she did not for an instant doubt, and was glad she had found him and taken him by surprise. To this fact she attributed his calmness. Yet she knew he was not the man to let an injury done to him go unavenged. A savage joy filled her breast as she thought that he would certainly

take a terrible revenge upon Le Beau Jules whenever he came across him.

Then it flashed into her shallow brain that he had gone to seek him. He would perhaps kill him, and then he would be hunted down, thrown into prison, executed. At the very least he would be loaded with chains and sent away beyond the seas to pass many years in ignominious captivity.

She trembled with terror at the thought. She bitterly regretted the mistake she had made in telling him that Le Beau Jules was in Paris. Why had she not waited? Why, oh! why had she egged him on? Why had she not thought of the consequences before? Why had she let him go?

Wild with fear and remorse, she hurried after her lover in the vain hope of overtaking him.

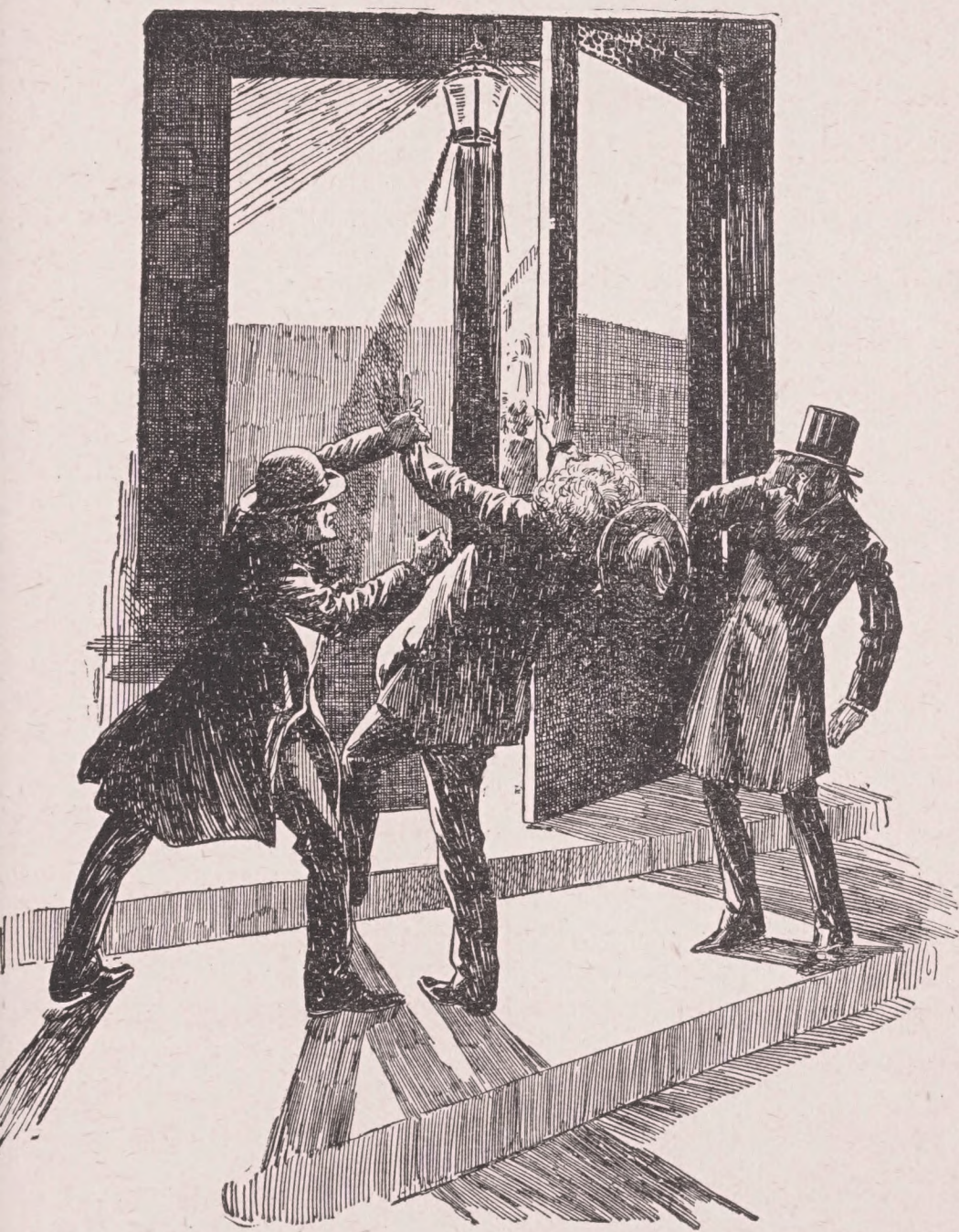
Meanwhile Antonio, with boiling blood, and murder in his heart, hurried over the Pont d'Arcole, across the Place du Parvis

Notre Dame and on into the Boulevard Saint Michel. It was nearly twelve o'clock. The theatres and café-concerts were emptying and their audiences were flocking to the cafés and brasseries on the boulevard.

Antonio had not proceeded far up the boulevard when he encountered Le Beau Jules, with a cigarette between his lips, strolling jauntily along in conversation with the Decadent Duransaur. They did not notice Antonio, and the latter passed them, "seeing red." He turned and gazed after them. Duransaur was holding open the door of a café for his companion to enter. The latter, with that exaggerated simulacrum of politeness which displays ignorance of the higher code of breeding, was demurring at entering the café first.

Quick as a flash the Italian glided up behind and, brusquely raising Le Beau Jules' left arm, plunged a knife into his heart.

So quickly had the crime been committed



"PLUNGED A KNIFE INTO HIS HEART."

that none of the passers-by who had witnessed it realized just what had happened till they heard Duransaur's frantic shouts of "A l'assassin!" and saw Le Beau Jules weltering in his blood on the café step, with the knife still sticking in his breast.

A hue and cry was at once raised, but the murderer had gained a considerable advance and was speeding across the Place Saint Michel before the crowd had well started in pursuit.

He was, however, intercepted by a couple of sergents de ville, who, hearing the shouting and perceiving a man running at the top of his speed, grappled with him and secured him after a desperate struggle.

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The execution had been expected for nearly a week. The usual appeal for mercy put forward by the condemned man's counsel on behalf of his client, who had sullenly refused to take the initiative, had been rejected

by the Court of Cassation, and there was no hope that the Pardons Commission would recommend the President of the Republic to overrule the finding of the Court.

Had the jury been made acquainted with the motive for the crime, they would beyond a doubt have found extenuating circumstances and saved the prisoner from the gory clutch of Monsieur de Paris. The hero of a crime passionnel, he would probably have escaped with a couple of years' imprisonment, and would have been hurried out of court followed by the sympathy of the emotional audience. He might even have been acquitted. But Antonio had guarded a ferocious silence which the utmost efforts of the examining magistrate had been unable to break, and there being absolutely nothing wherewith to work upon the feelings of the jury, the latter had no alternative but to condemn him.

Thrice in succession the ignoble human

vultures who flock from all quarters of the city when the taint of blood is in the air had passed the night carousing near the Place de la Roquette, only to slink back disappointed to their haunts at daybreak.

La Petite Irma was of the crowd, impelled to the scene of her lover's expiation by a morbid curiosity that she could not resist. Haggard, weary, and agitated, for the fourth, and what she instinctively felt would be the last time, she set out on her terrible pilgrimage.

It had been raining since nightfall. A cold, penetrating drizzle fell noiselessly out of the inky blackness overhead, soaking the legs of the rare, belated citizens hastening homeward and eclipsing themselves behind their umbrellas.

Dong! Dong! The hour of two boomed out from some clock-tower as La Petite Irma dragged herself across the Place de la Bastille and turned into the long, uphill Rue de la Roquette.

As she approached the neighborhood of the prison her heart beat violently, and the gas-lamps began to whirl. The cafés and wineshops were open, giving a less dreary appearance to the streets, and into the first establishment she came to she gladly turned. It was a wineshop, and she hastily gulped down a quantity of the fieriest and most unpalatable poison that ever libelled the good name of cognac.

The wineshop, which was filled with a queer crowd, reeked of absinthe. "Johnnies" in evening dress, with crumpled shirt-fronts, and very drunk, were exchanging inane witticisms with gaudy Venuses of gaslit debauchery; cheek by jowl with the latter were other erring women, of a still lower plane of degradation, jabbering in filthy argot with their "protectors," beings young in years, aged in crime, whose emaciated, beardless faces wore an expression of mingled indolence, cunning, and viciousness hor-

rible to look upon; querrulous workmen and seedy-looking individuals, who may have been tramps, chiffonniers, or detectives.

The girl was glad to escape again into the outer darkness and rain from the insulting criticisms of the women and the too pressing gallantries of the men. She continued up the Rue de la Roquette, past the closed shops of the vendors of tombstones and funeral wreaths, past more wineshops with their noisy clientèles, until she reached the prison. The Place de la Roquette was as silent as the Cemetery of Père la Chaise that lay just beyond the perspective of gas-lamps.

At length after an interval that seemed an age a clock struck three. Almost simultaneously the doors of La Petite Roquette opened, and half a hundred policemen in top boots and capes formed up along the pavement against the wall. A few minutes later a squadron of mounted Republican Guards

dashed up and the men dismounted and stood beside their steaming horses. Then a

company of foot-guards marched up, fell into line, and stacked their arms.



By this time the crowd had begun to gather. The half-hundred policemen wheeled into two squads, deployed across the Place, and drove the

people back as the doors of La Petite Roquette again opened, giving egress to more policemen with wooden barriers, which they placed at each extremity of the Place. Then a cart rumbled up, the five marked stones were displaced, and the erection of the guillotine began.

La Petite Irma, who had been elbowed to the rear of the crowd, shuddered as she

thought of Antonio calmly sleeping behind the frowning wall of La Grande Roquette, all unconscious of the nearness of his doom.

The rain had now stopped, and in the east approaching day had illumined the hitherto invisible banks of clouds with the faintest suspicion of slatey gray, that lightened, lightened, imperceptibly, outlining housetops and chimney-stacks and disputing supremacy with the street-lamps, which blinked paler and paler until, for the nonce, they had accomplished their mission and ceased to have any *raison-d'être*.

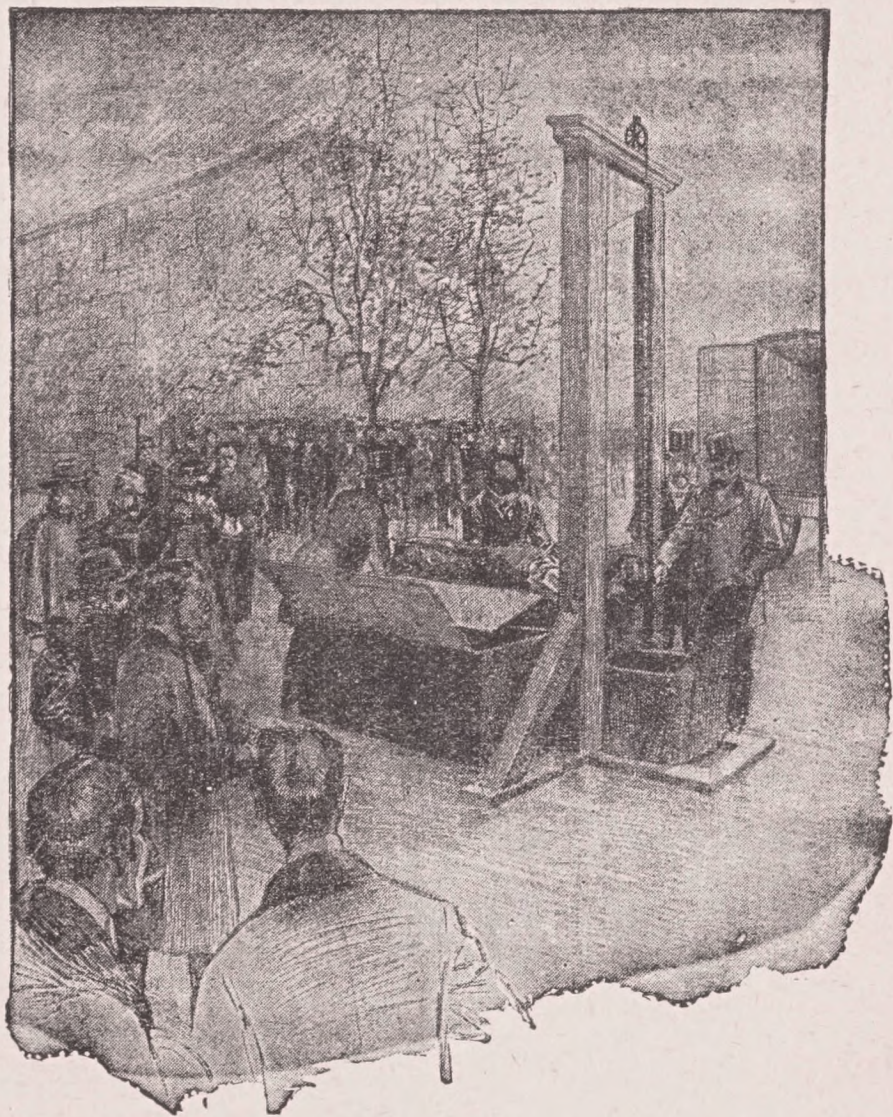
Men, women, and even children were there shivering in the raw, chilly air. The women looked haggard and bedraggled, and the pitiless light of day defined the crow's claws and wrinkles that nor paint nor powder could longer dissemble. The ashen faces of their exploiters were drawn by the eternal, hideous rictus that appears to characterize these callous gallants of the Paris gutter,

destined, many of them, to play the chief rôle one day in the ghastly tragedy they were so anxious to witness.

A couple of flower-girls, abandoned creatures who haunt nocturnal brasseries and other purlieus of vice, were offering faded bouquets for sale, and a miserable old man was selling petits pains.

But the horrible crowd waxed impatient. A gang of roughs began clapping and stamping, and shouting "Des lampions! Des lampions!" at the top of their voices. Others amused themselves by singing.

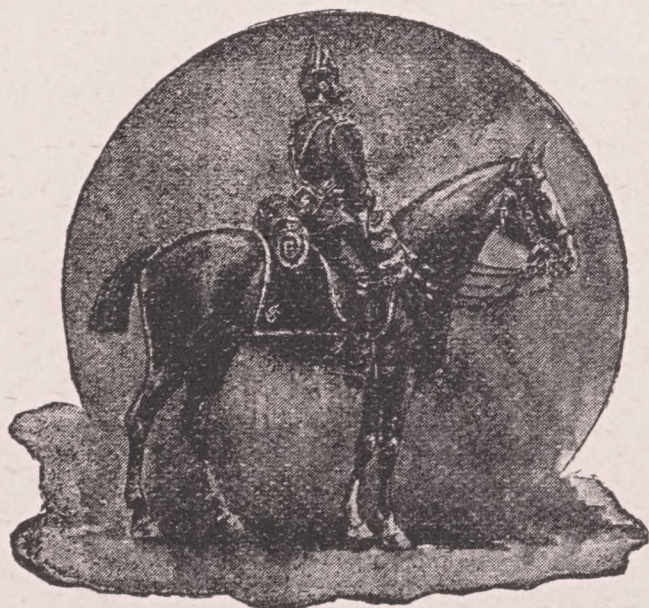
Suddenly there was a commotion in front, and the crowd subsided into an expectant silence. The foot-guards seized their rifles and dropped into line; the cavalrymen leaped into their saddles and drew their swords. Everybody stood on tiptoe and strained his neck in an effort to get a glimpse of what was about to take place. The great doors of La Grande Roquette were



EXPIATION.

thrown wide open, and the men in the crowd uncovered.

La Petite Irma, in rear of the spectators, was rooted to the spot, rigid with horror, her face buried in her hands. Suddenly a sharp thud was heard, and with an awful, piercing shriek of anguish, she swayed for an instant as though about to fall, and then staggered down the street.



CHAPTER XXII

THE FIAT OF DESTINY

THE little ménage in the Rue Serpente had passed the long months of winter in unruffled felicity. Seeing no one, going nowhere, they were wrapped up in each other, and Burroughs desired nothing else.

They had read in the papers of the murder of Le Beau Jules, and though each, out of a natural feeling of delicacy, refrained from all reference to the tragedy, both, and especially La Madeleine, experienced a sense of immense relief that he was out of the way. Not that he had in any way annoyed her since their meeting in Notre Dame; she had not even seen him. But she had lived in mortal fear of him.

Burroughs' "Beatrice" was finished and

carefully covered pending the time, rapidly approaching, when the Salon jury would sit in judgment upon it. He had also painted other pictures which he had taken to Du-



terque and Hoffmeyer's, where he had been received with a good deal more empressement than on the occasion of his first visit. His pictures, indeed, had been taken without hesitation and at once hung up in the show-rooms.

The painter was enthusiastic and confident. At times, such had been the change wrought within him during the past twelve months, he was even boisterously gay.

La Madeleine, however, began to give way to fits of thoughtfulness. By careful management she was making the money go as far as it was humanly possible to do; still, the cold fact forced itself upon her that their resources would soon be exhausted.

Knowing whence the funds came on the last occasion, she was by no means confident that the pictures now offered for sale would be purchased, and in any case she doubted whether they would bring in more than enough to tide over for a week or two the difficulties which she knew they would soon have to reckon with.

Among the recorded truths evolved out of the wisdom of the nations is an exasperating old saw to the effect that happiness cannot be purchased with money, or that wealth is not synonymous with a contented mind. The logic of this is incontrovertible; still it does not detract from the fact that the lack of a comfortable sufficiency of the national

currency has a disastrous influence upon the even tenor of the way of the immense majority of mortals.

It was a question of interest that led to the first "scene" between La Madeleine and her husband. Both had been rendered jubilant by a note from Duterque and Hoffmeyer's requesting the artist to call upon them apropos to an offer that had been made for one of his pictures. La Madeleine was especially thankful, for although she was postponing the inevitable as long as possible she saw that they would come to a standstill within a fortnight, and that she would have to return to the studios.

There was no help for it, it would come to this in the end, she felt certain; but once, when she had discreetly sounded her husband about it, she saw from the angry flush that mounted to his face that it would be no easy matter, even if it were possible, to overcome his repugnance to this course and ob-

tain his consent. And yet what else was to be done? They could not starve. Even if his "Beatrice" was accepted for the Salon—and she had no doubt whatever that it would be—it did not follow that the sky would immediately begin to rain roasted larks upon them.

She understood that he should feel reluctant to let her go. They had hardly been separated for an hour since their marriage. Personally she had no desire to resume her profession, but apart from the inconvenience of the thing she could conceive of no earthly reason why she should not do so. It did not strike her that his objection could be inspired by any other sentiment.

The immediate necessity for her going, however, would be averted by the sale of the picture, and for this she felt truly thankful. The artist seemed to be quite unconscious of, or could not understand, their position, and she dreaded to have to make it clear to

him. He had already begun to talk about taking an atelier.

Burroughs returned home in a state of high dudgeon. Some grasping idiot, he said, who wanted to enrich his collection at the expense of his (Burroughs') talent, had offered two hundred and fifty francs for the best of the pictures. He had haughtily refused. The picture dealer had assured him that it was the utmost the amateur was prepared to give. He had replied that he would rather put his foot through the canvas than give it away at such a figure, and had walked out of the shop.

"You did wrong," remarked La Madeleine quietly. "You should have taken the money. We want it."

Taken the money! Did she take him for a fool? Did she think that a man whose pictures had fetched thousands of francs was going to make himself so cheap as to accept a beggarly two hundred and fifty?

Two hundred and fifty, even after the

commission had been deducted, was better than nothing, she argued, and thought he had better go back and clinch the bargain.

The suggestion incensed the artist more than ever, and thoroughly exasperated at his obstinacy La Madeleine exclaimed:

“You don’t suppose that every time you get into trouble that big English poet is going to help you out of it!”

The remark had no sooner left her lips than she would have given her life to recall it. A startling change came over the artist. The angry color had faded from his face, leaving it deathly white, and his hands at his side were opening and closing nervously. His wife’s imprudent outburst had opened his eyes: his pictures had not sold at all. He owed his year of happiness free from care and rosy with hope, not to his own talent, but to the exquisite delicacy and generosity of his friend, whom he had disgracefully neglected, not even answering his let-

ters! And his wife knew it and had not told him!

Oh! it was more than his disillusioned pride could bear. Suffocating with mortification, rage, and despair, he threw himself upon the bed and rolled there, clutching at his hair and biting the pillow in his paroxysm, while the thoroughly frightened Madeleine sought in vain to calm him.

When the violence of the access had spent itself, he lay for a space groaning and bitterly reproaching the weeping woman with her "perfidy." Then he reproached himself and entreated her pardon for having bound her existence with his own hapless lot. Finally he got up and indited a long and spiteful letter to Lord Studley, which his wife seized the earliest opportunity of throwing on the fire.

The epistolatory effort had the effect of restoring his calmness somewhat, and La Madeleine, who did not comprehend and

therefore had no sympathy with such an excess of sensibility, sought to reason with him. She pointed out that there was no occasion to take the matter so much to heart; that he might regard the money left by his friend as a loan, and repay it with interest some day.

This was the only course open to him, and he was constrained to derive what comfort from it he could, which was very little. His amour propre had received a terrible blow. He could not rally from it and for a few days was morose and sullen, eating little and speaking little, to La Madeleine's great grief, until his mind was occupied by the care of sending off his "Beatrice" to the Palais de l'Industrie.

Its departure was a momentous event in the little household. Burroughs, La Madeleine, and M. and Mme. Durand all helped to hamper the men engaged in the no easy task of getting the big and carefully boxed

picture round the angles of the staircase. Burroughs temporarily recovered his cheerfulness, and poor Madeleine was so thankful thereat that she had not the heart to tell him until the morrow that the expense of sending the picture away had swallowed up the remainder of her hoard.

But the subject had at last to be broached. La Madeleine endeavored to make light of it. It was of no consequence, she said. She would go and pose for a few hours a day until one of the pictures sold, and this would bring them in enough to live in even greater comfort than they had been accustomed to of late.

Burroughs, who had listened to her at first with a distraught air and a bored expression on his face, got up and went to her, his heart swelling with love and emotion.

"Dear little Madeleine, brave little woman," he said, taking her face between his hands and kissing her gravely. "I will go

down to hell with your blood and mine upon my head rather than let you do that!"

"But," she urged desperately, determined to argue the matter out while they were about it, "What are we to do?"

"Do? Have patience, my darling," he rejoined, counselling in her a virtue the lack of which in himself he was ill able to conceal. "It will be all right, you will see, when the Salon opens and my 'Beatrice' begins to be talked about. Cannot we hold out till then?"

La Madeleine shook her head.

"No? Then I shall have to swallow the pill and accept the offer for that picture, I suppose. Confound it, there is no alternative," he added angrily.

"And if the picture—the 'Beatrice,' I mean—is rejected?" she persisted.

"Rejected!"

He gazed at her stupidly, passing his hand over his forehead. The idea that it could be

rejected did not appear to have occurred to him.

"That is not possible!" he stammered.
"That is not possible!"

He took up his hat and went out. La Madeleine followed on tiptoe and watched him over the banisters as he went downstairs. He was shaking his head and muttering that the thing was impossible. She grew sick with apprehension as she thought of the consequences likely to result from a refusal of the picture.

Arrived at Duterque and Hoffmeyer's a fresh disappointment awaited him. It had required a supreme effort on his part to overcome his humiliation and enter the shop with an air of indifference. Indeed he had passed the street several times before he could summon up sufficient courage to venture into it. But he thought of La Madeleine and what was expected of him, and that imparted to him the strength of desperation.

He was informed that the would-be purchaser had refused to give more than the sum he had offered for the picture, and after selecting a number of others had left Paris, and his whereabouts was not known.

There was no help for it. After again vainly trying to induce the artist to let her return to the studios, La Madeleine was compelled to pawn the few jewels she possessed in order to keep things going. She did not tell her husband about it, and he did not notice the disappearance of the trinkets, nor did he ask where the money came from that supplied their daily meals. His mind was occupied with his picture, and he seemed to be unconscious of all else.

He would rise and pace the room restlessly hours before the postman made his first round, and descended to the concierges' loge several times a day for fully a fortnight before it was possible that he could receive the verdict of the Salon jury.

As the days went by he grew more anxious and excited, until the tension on his nerves was terrible. At last came an envelope bearing the well-known stamp of the Société des Artistes Français. With feverish eagerness he tore it open.

It was before the split in the artistic camp had occurred, and the establishment of a rival Salon on the Champ de Mars had furnished space for the annual display of several hundred more yards of mediocre canvases. The work that devolved upon the jury was stupendous, the claims upon them embarrassing, the influence brought to bear powerful.

Burroughs' "Beatrice" was rejected.

La Madeleine watched him in fear and trembling as he opened the missive.

She read the verdict by the hard, hopeless expression of his face. But he gave way to no violent outburst, as she had expected.

“It is destiny,” he laughed, handing her the letter and dropping dejectedly into a chair.



CHAPTER XIII

IN THE TRACK OF THE SETTING SUN

“OUF!” Lord Studley gave a grunt of profound satisfaction as he jumped out of the train at the Gare Saint Lazare. It was so good to be in Paris again!

This time he had not come over on a flying visit. His purpose was to resume his old life in the Quarter and his flirtations with the muse, necessarily interrupted by the care and responsibility of settling matters connected with his estates and putting in order the family affairs, which he had found somewhat involved.

Also to escape from the demands upon him made by society and by his importunate borough, which wanted to send him to Parliament, where it had not been without a

representative of the House of Studley for over a century. His lordship hated politics.

Besides, he was anxious about Burroughs. What had become of his American friend, and what was he doing? he wondered. La Madeleine had broken her promise to write, and though he had written to the artist himself three or four times he had received no reply. He knew that Burroughs had recovered, because, having communicated with one of the medical celebrities he had engaged to attend his friend, he had been informed that the latter was convalescent and had gone to the country to recuperate.

Wherefore, then, this silence?

He sent his man on to his quarters with his luggage, and resolved to stretch his legs by walking across the city to the Latin Quarter viâ the Halles Centrales. The busy market under the walls of the beautiful old church of Saint Eustache had always interested him. He had often enough stayed out

all night—as a preferable measure to getting up early—in order to enjoy the picturesque animation that reigns there while the “Ventre de Paris” is being supplied. He picked his way slowly through the countless vehicles



of every size and shape that encumbered the street in all directions, and crossed the Pont Saint Michel.

The very first person he saw on entering the Boul' Mich' was Duransaur. The De-

cadent was seated outside a café, serenely sucking the stump of a cigar and letting the water trickle into his absinthe from a decanter held high above the glass. He was attired in an exceedingly threadbare and faded frock-coat, buttoned close up to meet a black plastron which, large as it was, ill-concealed his dirty shirt-front and served to heighten the griminess of his collar. His unkempt hair protruded well over his ears from beneath a greasy, straight-brimmed stovepipe hat.

He uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise on catching sight of Studley, and advanced to meet him with both hands outstretched. With true Gallic effusiveness he would have embraced him; but the poet drew the line at being embraced by men. With admirable tact he seized one of the Frenchman's hands in a grip that made him wince, at the same time slapping him on the shoulder with such hearty cordiality that he

nearly knocked all the breath out of his body.

He then took a chair opposite to him and Duransaur made him acquainted with all that had transpired in Bohemia during his prolonged absence—how Nini la Blonde had become stage-struck and had accepted an offer to perform nightly at the Fantaisies-Follichonnes; how Boule de Loto had found favor in the eyes of a Russian prince, and might be seen every afternoon “*faisant de l'épate*” in the Allée des Acacias, in the Bois, where her elaborate display of diamonds had created no end of a sensation; how since the execution of Antonio—the details of which his lordship had read in the papers—La Petite Irma went about in deep mourning, and he, Duransaur, was trying to persuade her to be consoled:

“Oh! la, mes amis, quelle veine!

Elle a vingt ans à peine.

Consolons cette veuve là!”

“And La Madeleine?”

La Madeleine? She had not been seen for months and no one knew what had become of her.

Duransaur wound up by giving his companion to understand that his credit having been stretched to the point of rupture in the quarter of the New Idea, he had been compelled to fall back upon the old stamping-ground in order to procure, à l'œil, the nectar of the “muse verte,” without whose insidious inspiration his mind was a blank and life a delusion and a snare—likewise the more solid sustenance indispensable to the welfare of his mere corporeal being.

Having paid for the “consommations,” Lord Studley took leave of the Montmartre bard, after managing to empty his cigar-case on to the table as he offered him a smoke, and pressing a louis into his hand as he shook it—only as a loan, of course.

He went on to the Rue Serpente, where

he was greeted with obsequious politeness by Mme. Durand, who recognized him immediately.

She thought M. Burroughs was in, for she had not seen him come down, nor Madame either.

"Madame!—Madame who?" blurted Studley, astonished.

"Why, Madame Burroughs, Monsieur Burroughs' wife."

"Do you mean—?"

"Yes, La Madeleine. Did you not know they were married?" asked the woman, whose turn it was to be surprised.

"No. I have been away from Paris for some time; the letter must have miscarried."

"That reminds me that one has just come for him. I was about to go up with it," she remarked insinuatingly as he turned to quit the loge.

"Give it to me, I will take it," he said.

As the woman handed the envelope to him

he looked at it mechanically. It had a black border and bore a United States postage stamp.

“Oh! oh!” he thought as he went upstairs. “So he fell in love with her, did he? And married her! Je-os-e-phat! Married her! Well, I never imagined that he, of all men, would do such a thing. . . . And yet, what a fool I am! it is the natural result of their being thrown together like that. Human nature is human nature, of course. . . . And he hasn’t got such a bad bargain after all. I would gladly have married her myself. She knows that, the little hussy . . . But she always laughed at me. . . . She never would take me au sérieux—or any other way. Yet, God knows, I was serious. How awfully stuck on her I was till she took up with that shock-haired idiot who is dead. . . . That settled the business. I never could conceive of a woman so absolutely lost to all sense of the beautiful in man as to

give herself to hair like that! . . . And to think I paid £2,000 for X——'s picture of her! I'll have it sent from Studley Hall and make them a wedding present of it—I will, by Jove!"

Thus soliloquizing he had reached the top landing and was knocking discreetly at the door. Receiving no answer, he knocked again, and then a third time, louder, but all was silent within. He tried the door and found it was locked. Then it seemed to him that a disagreeable smell came from the room. There was no mistaking it: it was the pungent odor of charcoal fumes.

Seized with a horrible apprehension, he pounded heavily with both hands, but with no better result. This decided him. He applied his shoulder and, exerting his strength in a great effort, burst in the door.

A rush of stifling fumes almost choked him as he dashed into the room. Two charcoal braziers on the floor had nearly burnt

themselves out, and on the bed, hand in hand, lay Burroughs and La Madeleine, their pallid, upturned faces distorted in the agony of death.

Quick as a flash the poet sprang to the window, the apertures of which had been carefully filled with strips of linen, and flung it wide open. Then lifting the bodies off the bed and laying them out on the landing, he tore open the clothing round their necks and roared for help at the top of his stentorian voice.

In an instant the house was in an uproar. Women appeared at their doors and screamed with terror. They did not know what was the matter, but jumped to the conclusion that the house was on fire or that somebody was being murdered. M. Durand bounded up the stairs revolver in hand, while Mme. Durand rushed into the street and yelled "Police!"

"They are dead!" shouted the poet when the breathless concierge arrived upon the



“EXERTING HIS STRENGTH IN A GREAT EFFORT BURST IN THE DOOR.”

scene. "Go and fetch as many doctors as you can find, and then tell the police. Take a cab, anything! A thousand francs if a doctor is here within three minutes!"

M. Durand darted off again, while Studley, with great presence of mind, tried to restore respiration by the methods usually employed in cases of drowning.

In a few minutes two doctors arrived. They were followed by others and the district commissary with a squad of police. The latter soon cleared the house of the crowd that had gathered and invaded it.

The commissary's practised eye at once noticed the scraps of a letter that had been torn up and thrown in the fireplace. He placed the scraps together on the table and



found that it was the card from the Société des Artists Français.

"This, no doubt, is the explanation," he said, turning to the poet.

He then took possession of the letter that had been given to Studley by the concierge. This being in English he was unable to read it, and requested the poet to translate it to him.

It was from Burroughs' mother. In a few pathetic words she told him that his father had been fatally injured in a railway accident, but before dying had forgiven his boy, as he hoped to be forgiven for his unreasoning harshness. He had drawn up a new will which, after making provision for his widow and daughter, left everything to his son. The letter concluded with a touching appeal to the artist to return home without delay.

Meanwhile the doctors had been employing all their science, and after an hour's hard work, one of them, with an exultant excla-

mation, announced that Burroughs' heart was beating. Thus encouraged they redoubled their efforts, and soon, with a deep sigh, the artist opened his eyes.

La Madeleine's eyes were also open, but they were fixed in the glassy stare of death.



The great liner ploughed its way majestically down the English Channel toward the sunset:

“Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold

.

And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most
high

Were strewn as autumn strews the golden close
With rose leaves.”

Upon the promenade deck, wrapped in a heavy travelling coat and cape, a man leaned

on the rail and watched the waves capped with sheaves of foam, which, thrown off by the leviathan, recoiled in mighty undulations, scattering myriads of spray diamonds adown their bottle-green slopes. His face was wan and pinched with suffering, and his brown locks were prematurely streaked with gray.

A tall, powerful-looking man stood beside him, his hand resting protectingly upon his companion's shoulder.

Thus they stood silently till the pale rose-shot gold of the sky was barred with purple banks of clouds, and the gathering gloom veiled the fast receding coast line behind them.

"Percy," murmured the invalid, at length, as his thin, bloodless fingers sought and closed over the hand of his stalwart friend, "I cannot realize that I have lived during the past seven years. I seem to have awakened from a horrible nightmare, the impression of which I cannot shake off. And like a dream

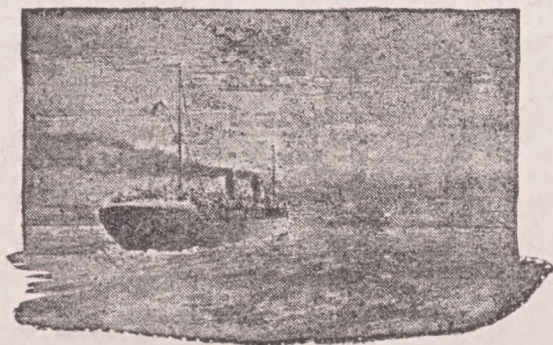
that is past, the details of which one seeks in vain to recall, everything appears to me indistinct, even her sweet face, though in the hush of night I often hear her call to me and instinctively stretch out my hands, only to clutch the pillow.

“Ah! Percy, I have suffered!”

“Indeed you have, my poor Charlie,” said the poet feelingly. “But, see! the scene of your sorrows and illusions is shut out from your sight—forever, I hope—and the glory of yonder sunset toward which we are speeding holds out a promise of a new and brighter life in your own country, among your own people.”

THE END.

14



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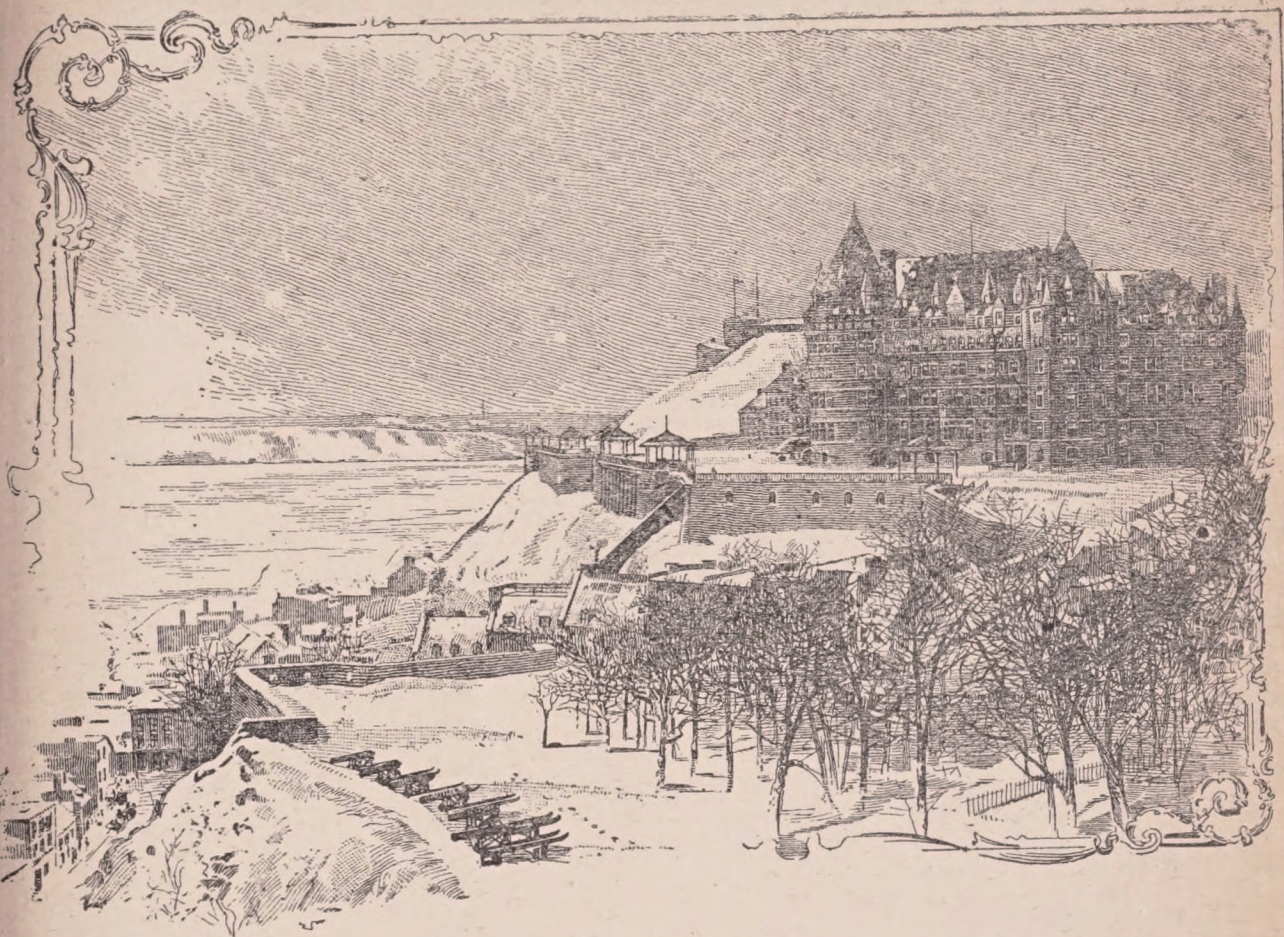
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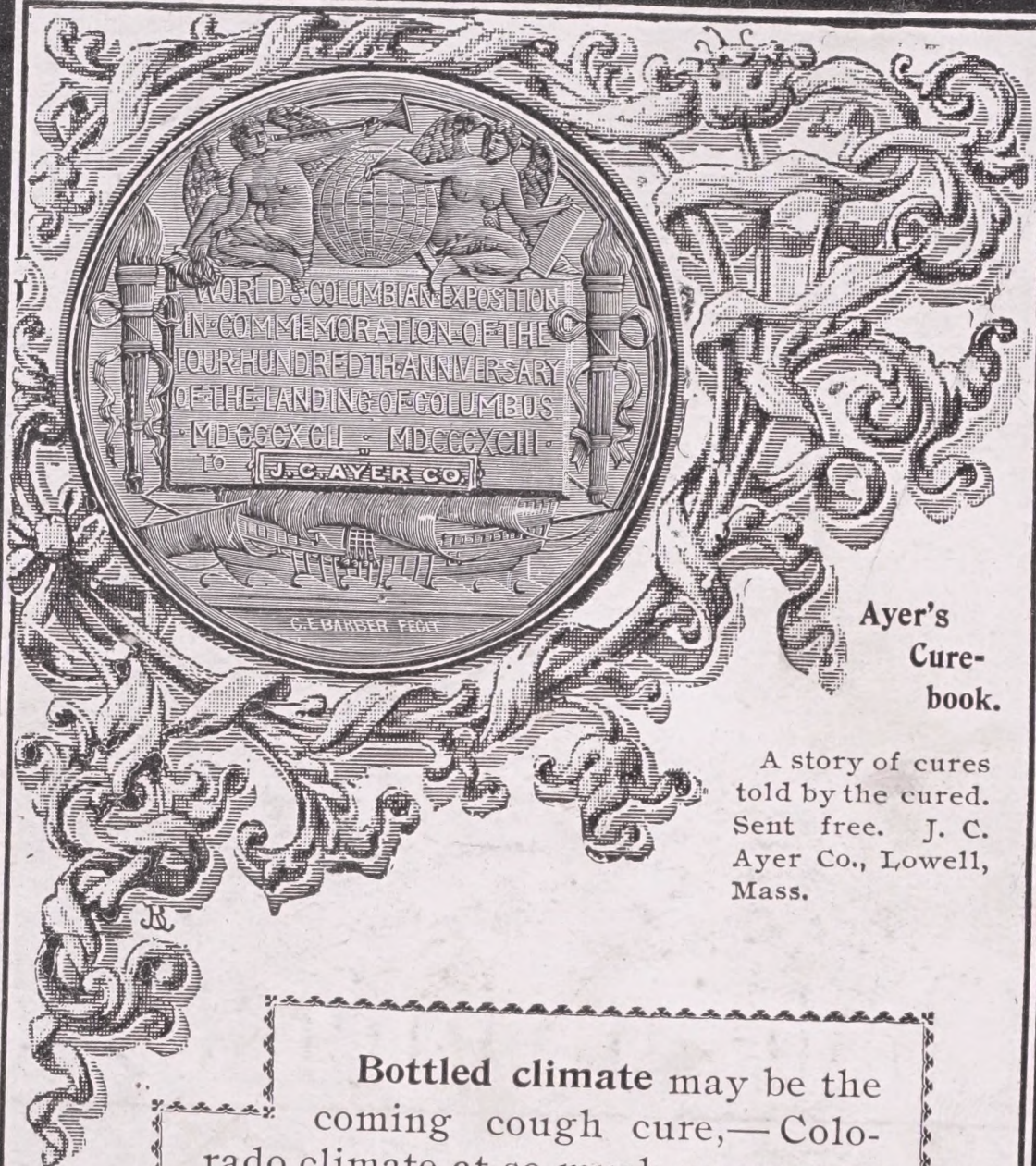


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